LOVE STORIES OF THE WEST

WESTERN

JULY

25¢

ROMANCES

THEY CALLED ME SHERIFF ANNIE

Just Imported:

World's Smallest Adding Machine

Fits In Your Pocket! Saves You Time, Money And Mistakes! Perfect For Salesmen, Students, Housewives, Business Men, Storekeepers, Etc. Adds and Subtracts Up To 1,000,000 In Seconds!

IT NEVER MAKES A MISTAKE

WHAT IT WILL DO FOR YOU:

- BALANCES CHECK BOOK
- KEEPS YOU ON BUDGET
- CHECKS GROCERY TAPES
- DOES HOME WORK
- TOTALS SALES SLIPS
- CHECKS SCORES
- TOTALS CAR MILEAGE
- DOES 1001 OTHER ADDING AND SUBTRACTING CHORES — EACH IN SECONDS!

FROM WEST BERLIN, GERMANY, COMES NEWS OF AN AMAZING time saving, work saving, money saving invention. The world's smallest, precision made adding machine that adds up to 1,000,000 . . . subtracts to 1,000,000 . . . does it in seconds . . . and never makes a mistake!

A beautifully made machine that saves you endless hours of mental work every year . . . saves you time . . . cuts out costly mistakes . . . lets you check bills, catch errors, add up your budget, keep scores and perform 1,001 other adding and subtracting chores . . . all in a matter of seconds and without a single mental effort on your part!

A German Invention

The secret is a scientific principle acknowledged to be perfect by experts throughout the world. Developed by German scientists, ADDIATOR is now being used all over Europe. Pan American Airways, American Express and other companies as well as millions of people like you in 51 countries use and rave over ADDIATOR.

From all over come reports of nerve-wracking additions of long columns becoming easy as a game . . . of the speed . . . the sureness . . . the simplicity of this miracle machine! Think what this means to you. Now at last you can check everything you buy . . . every bill . . . every statement . . . and never lose a penny because of mistakes. You can add up your budget . . . check your children's school work . . . add up checks . . . inventories . . . records of car mileage . . . expenses keep track of what you spend each day . . . yes, do 1,001 everyday adding and subtracting jobs.

SAVES YOU MANY DOLLARS!

Here's a money saving use for amazing ADDIATOR, the world's smallest adding machine. Add up your Super-Market items as fast as you take them off the shelves. Know how much you're spending as you go along! SAVE by knowing when to stop spending. Stay within your budget! And eliminate costly mistakes at the checkout counter by knowing the total before the clerk has punched a single figure!

3½ MILLION ADDIATORS IN USE, SAVING TIME, WORK AND MONEY

Used By European Governments, Giant Firms Throughout the World!

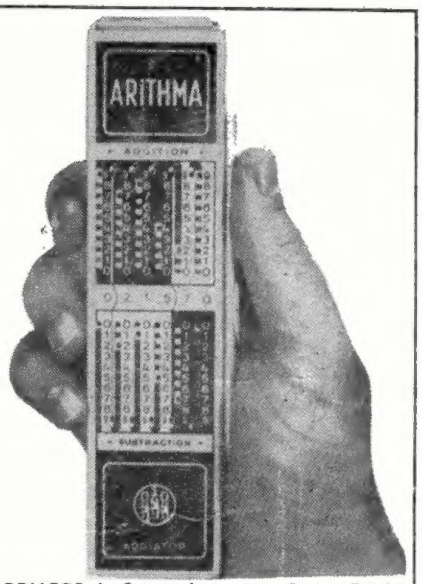
Marvel of Design Never Needs Repairs

Not a toy—not a gadget. Amazing ADDIATOR and all its moving parts are constructed entirely of aluminum or brass. It lasts a lifetime. Best of all, even a child can add or subtract up to 1,000,000 without a mistake.

ADDIATOR Is In Short Supply!

All that amazing new ADDIATOR costs is $3.98. That's because it is made in West Germany. Yet it is just as accurate as costly office adding machines. But because it comes from West Germany, and the demand in Europe is tremendous, the supplies available in this country are very limited. Only if you act at once can we guarantee to fill your order. This free trial offer will not be repeated in this paper this year. To get your ADDIATOR for yourself or for a gift, mail the free trial coupon today.

ADDIATOR is sent to you complete with FREE CARRYING CASE with Full Money Back Guarantee.



ADDIATOR Is Super Accurate — Super Fast!

Add or subtract the longest columns without effort. Addiator checks bank statements in seconds . . . checks bills . . . budgets . . . does homework. NO MORE MISTAKES, keeps a running total, automatically!

FREE TRIAL OFFER

Stop being a slave to figures. Avoid the costly mistakes everyone makes of being too lazy to check bills and statements. Try amazing ADDIATOR for one week free.

See how beautifully constructed it is . . . how easy to read the numbers . . . how smooth and silent the operation.

See for yourself how ADDIATOR adds up your bills in seconds . . . totals your grocery bills like lightning . . . checks your bank statement in nothing flat . . . figures up your mileage . . . does 1,001 adding or subtracting jobs for you and NEVER MAKES A MISTAKE.

Use it to check bridge, canasta and other scores. Let your children check their homework in seconds. Put ADDIATOR to every test. If you don't agree it will save you endless time, effort and money, you have used it entirely free. It won't cost you a penny.

3½ Million Amazing ADDIATORS Now In Use Throughout The World. Be The First In Your Area To Own One

MAIL FREE TRIAL COUPON TODAY

HARRISON HOME PRODUCTS CORP., Dept. DA-6
P.O. Box 444, Great Neck, N. Y.

Please send my ADDIATOR with free carrying case as checked below for one week's NO RISK TRIAL. IF ADDIATOR does not do all my adding and subtracting for me in seconds . . . without ever making a mistake . . . if it doesn't save me time, effort and money . . . then you will refund my money immediately including postage.

( ) I enclose $3.98 with full money back guarantee. Send ADDIATOR postpaid. I save all C.O.D. charges.

( ) Send ADDIATOR C.O.D. I will pay postman $3.98 plus C.O.D. postage. Same money back guarantee.

Name_____

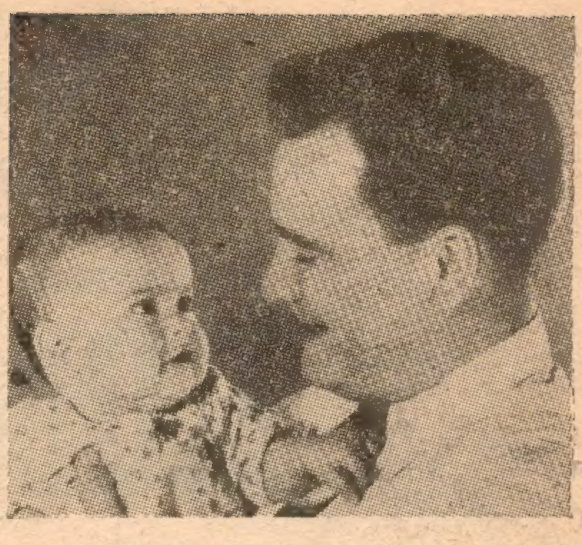
Address_____

City_____ Zone_____ State_____

☐ SAVE! Order one ADDIATOR for yourself, another for a gift. TWO ADDIATORS sent for $6.98. You save $1.00.

Time to take out

SUCCESS INSURANCE



Chances are you carry life insurance. And health insurance. And insurance on your car.

But a man with a growing family needs "success insurance," too.

Here's how it works: Each week you invest a few hours' spare time and a few dollars in *specialized training at home.* You follow a regular program of self-improvement. On the job, you apply what you learn.

In a few short months, your policy starts to pay off.

First, you win recognition from your employer. Second, you find new opportunities opening up for you. Third, you're one of the first in line for promotion, one of the last to take a cut or be laid off should times get tough.

And when you get your I. C. S. diploma, you're in a class with leaders in every field of business and industry.

Specialized training as offered by I. C. S. is as good "success insurance" as you can buy. 257 courses to choose from. Texts are up-to-date, easy-to-follow, authoritative. Instruction is practical, personalized. You learn as you earn, and you pay as you go.

Find out more about I. C. S. "success insurance." Mail the coupon today for three free books: (1) Opportunity Handbook for the field of your choice, (2) 36-page pocket guide, "How to Succeed," (3) sample lesson (Math.) demonstrating the I. C. S. method.

For Real Job Security—Get an I. C. S. Diploma! **I. C. S., Scranton 15, Penna.** Accredited Member, National Home Study Council

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

ICS

BOX 44301 D, SCRANTON 15, PENNA. (Partial list of 257 courses)

Without cost or obligation, send me "HOW to SUCCEED" and the opportunity booklet about the field BEFORE which I have marked X (plus sample lesson):

ARCHITECTURE and BUILDING CONSTRUCTION
- ☐ Air Conditioning
- ☐ Architecture
- ☐ Arch. Drawing and Designing
- ☐ Building Contractor
- ☐ Building Estimator
- ☐ Carpentry and Millwork
- ☐ Carpenter Foreman
- ☐ Heating
- ☐ Interior Decoration
- ☐ Painting Contractor
- ☐ Plumbing
- ☐ Reading Arch. Blueprints

ART
- ☐ Commercial Art
- ☐ Magazine & Book Illus.
- ☐ Show Card and Sign Lettering
- ☐ Sketching and Painting

AUTOMOTIVE
- ☐ Automobiles
- ☐ Auto Body Rebuilding and Refinishing
- ☐ Auto Engine Tuneup
- ☐ Auto Technician

AVIATION
- ☐ Aero-Engineering Technology
- ☐ Aircraft & Engine Mechanic

BUSINESS
- ☐ Accounting
- ☐ Advertising
- ☐ Business Administration
- ☐ Business Management
- ☐ Cost Accounting
- ☐ Creative Salesmanship
- ☐ Managing a Small Business
- ☐ Professional Secretary
- ☐ Public Accounting
- ☐ Purchasing Agent
- ☐ Salesmanship
- ☐ Salesmanship and Management
- ☐ Traffic Management

CHEMICAL
- ☐ Analytical Chemistry
- ☐ Chemical Engineering
- ☐ Chem. Lab. Technician
- ☐ Elements of Nuclear Energy
- ☐ General Chemistry
- ☐ Natural Gas Prod. and Trans.
- ☐ Petroleum Prod. and Engr.
- ☐ Professional Engineer (Chem)
- ☐ Pulp and Paper Making

CIVIL ENGINEERING
- ☐ Civil Engineering
- ☐ Construction Engineering
- ☐ Highway Engineering
- ☐ Professional Engineer (Civil)
- ☐ Reading Struc. Blueprints
- ☐ Structural Engineering
- ☐ Surveying and Mapping

DRAFTING
- ☐ Aircraft Drafting
- ☐ Architectural Drafting
- ☐ Drafting Machine Design
- ☐ Electrical Drafting
- ☐ Mechanical Drafting
- ☐ Sheet Metal Drafting
- ☐ Structural Drafting

ELECTRICAL
- ☐ Electrical Engineering
- ☐ Elec. Engr. Technician
- ☐ Elec. Light and Power
- ☐ Practical Electrician
- ☐ Practical Lineman
- ☐ Professional Engineer (Elec)

HIGH SCHOOL
- ☐ High School Diploma

- ☐ Good English
- ☐ High School Mathematics
- ☐ Short Story Writing

LEADERSHIP
- ☐ Industrial Foremanship
- ☐ Industrial Supervision
- ☐ Personnel-Labor Relations
- ☐ Supervision

MECHANICAL and SHOP
- ☐ Diesel Engines
- ☐ Gas-Elec. Welding
- ☐ Industrial Engineering
- ☐ Industrial Instrumentation
- ☐ Industrial Metallurgy
- ☐ Industrial Safety
- ☐ Machine Design
- ☐ Machine Shop Practice
- ☐ Mechanical Engineering
- ☐ Professional Engineer (Mech)
- ☐ Quality Control
- ☐ Reading Shop Blueprints
- ☐ Refrigeration and Air Conditioning
- ☐ Tool Design ☐ Tool Making

RADIO, TELEVISION
- ☐ General Electronics Tech.
- ☐ Industrial Electronics
- ☐ Practical Radio-TV Eng'r'g
- ☐ Practical Telephony
- ☐ Radio-TV Servicing

RAILROAD
- ☐ Car Inspector and Air Brake
- ☐ Diesel Electrician
- ☐ Diesel Engr. and Fireman
- ☐ Diesel Locomotive

STEAM and DIESEL POWER
- ☐ Combustion Engineering
- ☐ Power Plant Engineer
- ☐ Stationary Diesel Engr.
- ☐ Stationary Fireman

TEXTILE
- ☐ Carding and Spinning
- ☐ Cotton Manufacture
- ☐ Cotton Warping and Weaving
- ☐ Loom Fixing Technician
- ☐ Textile Designing
- ☐ Textile Finishing & Dyeing
- ☐ Throwing
- ☐ Warping and Weaving
- ☐ Worsted Manufacturing

Name_____ Age_____ Home Address_____

City_____ Zone_____ State_____ Working Hours_____ A.M. to P.M._____

Occupation_____

Canadian residents send coupon to International Correspondence Schools, Canadian, Ltd., Montreal, Canada. . . . Special tuition rates to members of the U. S. Armed Forces.

TO OUR READERS This magazine has been STREAMLINED for your convenience. It contains the *same number of pages and words as before,* but with this thinner paper, you will find it easier to read and handle. We would like to hear from you, telling us whether you agree or disagree with this change, so won't you please drop us a card? Thank you. *The Editors.*

WESTERN ROMANCES

BRAND NEW LOVE STORIES OF THE WEST

Volume 8 July, 1958 Number 4

LOVE FLAMED ACROSS THE BAR B 6
I didn't know if I could get beneath Emily's coldness and find any warmth there — but one thing I'd do: I'd teach her to curb some of that arrogance she displayed.

THEY CALLED ME SHERIFF ANNIE 34
This man who figured that a girl as sheriff was hitting a new low in sheer degeneracy thought he was all I had to worry about, but he was the least of my troubles.

THE FLAME MAIDEN ..... Peter Norcross 44
Lee Vane was on the trail of a legend — the flame maiden. But that legend covered up something pretty grim, he suspected — and he was sure when he found Mady Niles . . .

TENDERFOOT'S DUTY ..... Donna Reece 52
Perhaps some men would have shrugged it off, forgot about it, when a girl like Sue Bowen spurned their aid. But Jay Ridley wouldn't take no for an answer, when he could see that Sue was in danger — whether she believed it or not!

THE MARSHAL STOOD ALONE ..... Olin Grant 66
Nancy Kline had come from the East, but she wasn't slow on the uptake. It was plain enough that Clint Jensen was facing powerful forces, and that no one dared to side the marshal against lawlessness. Not even Jensen's brother, who'd turned traitor!

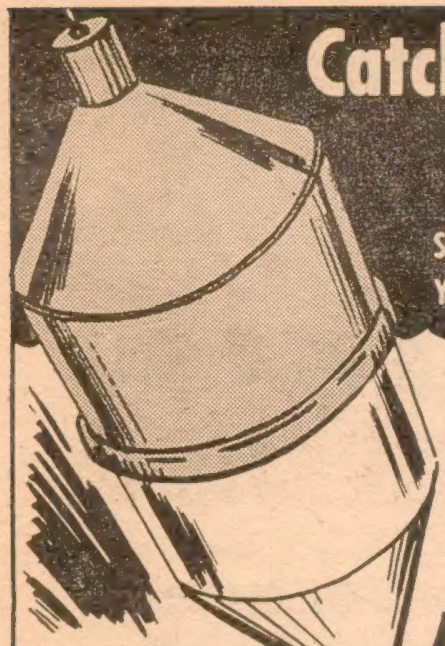
MARIE ANTOINETTE PARK, *Editor*
ROBERT A. W. LOWNDES, Managing Editor

WESTERN ROMANCES, July, 1958. Published bi-monthly by COLUMBIA PUBLICATIONS, INC., 1 Appleton Street, Holyoke, Mass. Editorial and executive offices at 241 Church Street, New York 13, New York. Entered as second class matter at the Post Office at Holyoke, Mass., under the act of March 3, 1879. 25c per copy; yearly subscriptions $1.50. When submitting manuscripts enclose stamped self-addressed envelope for their return if found unavailable. The publishers will exercise care in the handling of unsolicited manuscripts, but assume no responsibilities for their return. Entire contents copyright 1958 by Columbia Publications, Inc. Printed in the U. S. A.

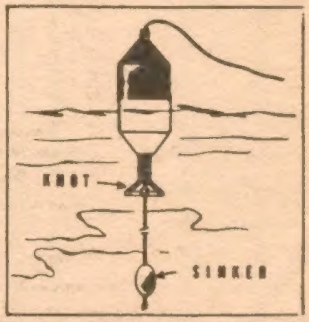
Catch More Fish... AUTOMATICALLY!

SENSATIONAL BOB-O-MATIC CASTING FLOAT HOOKS YOUR FISH AUTOMATICALLY THE INSTANT HE BITES

Here's a really clever new invention that now automatically enables you to catch those fish you've been losing. Human reaction is often too slow to set the hook at the right instant, so Bob-O-Matic does it for you automatically. The instant a fish bites—WHAM! the automatic trigger goes to work at lightning speed setting the hook firmly in the mouth of the fish in just 1/50 of a second. YOUR FISH IS CAUGHT! Takes only one second to re-set trigger. Fish over and over until you've caught more than you can carry. Don't delay! Order now and really enjoy fishing at its very best Complete with instructions

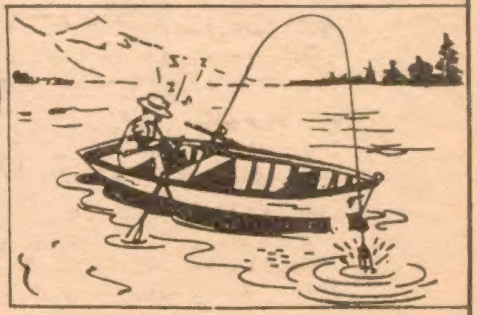


Bob-O-Matic floats upright to show you exactly where the bait is riding and automatically allows the bait to reach the depth you desire.



Cast more effectivaly with Bob-O-Matic than with ordinary floating rigs because the weight is concentrated in one place close to the sinker and the baited hook

only $1.98



Bob-O-Matic assures you of coming home with the biggest catch and the most admiring glances. You can fish off a boat, a bridge, leave for a drink, or take a nap. Bob-O-Matic does the work for you. It hooks the fish and keeps him hooked.

Sensational Features

- Slip line casts more effectively than ordinary float rig.
- Automatically allows bait to reach desired depth.
- Permits reeling fish as close to rod tip as possible.
- May be used as fixed position bobb.
- Sets hook automatically in 1/50 of a second to assure a big catch.

Money Back Guarantee

Bob-O-Matic is guaranteed to catch fish automatically. If you're not 100% delighted, your money will be refunded.

Money Back Guarantee

Sportman's Post Dept. BT-35
Lynbrook, N. Y.

Rush Bob-O-Matic automatic fisher to me at once on 10 day free trial offer at $1.98

☐ Send C.O.D. I will pay postman on delivery plus a few cents postage.
☐ I enclose payment. Sportsman's Post will pay postage.

Name .....

Address .....

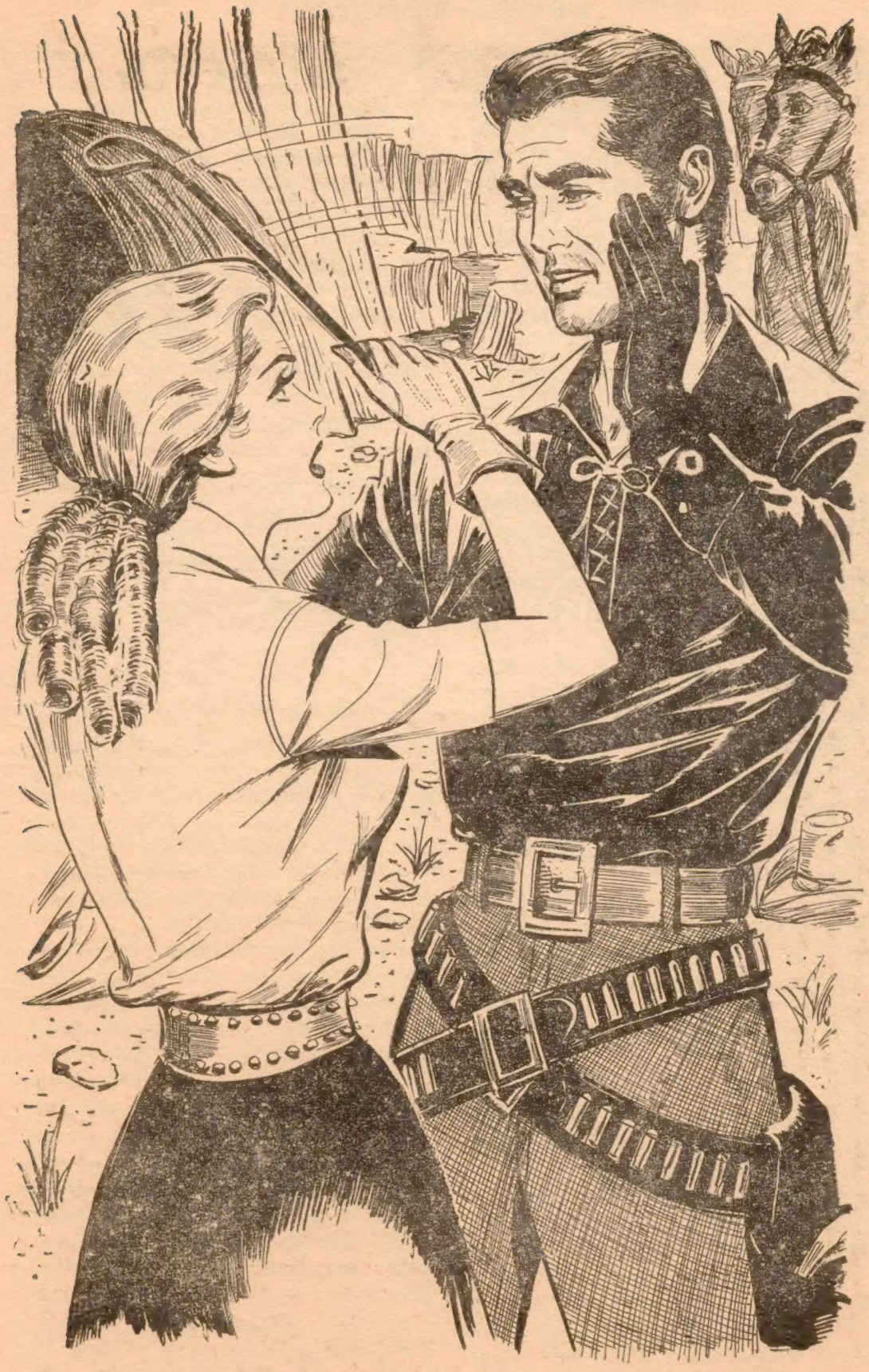
Loved Flamed Across The Bar B

Probably no man could change Emily into a warmer, more human girl — but I'd teach her to hide some of her contempt before I rode on my way . . .

THE AFTERNOON sun was broiling down on Bartlett Wells and most of the town's people had gone under cover for their *siesta*. The dust lay deep in the street and there was a film of it over the false-fronted adobe and frame buildings. There was a taste of it in my throat as I watched my horse being watered in the livery trough before I found the nearest saloon.

The livery man said, "Here he comes now. The man you was askin' about." He pointed to a buckboard and a team of fine strong bays driven by a bonnetted girl. Then I saw the man riding beside it. He sat tall in the saddle, his Stetson slanted down over his eyes and his face the color old saddle leather. "That's Drago Rawle," he said.

I nodded. I knew Drago Rawle. He was my step-brother and the man I'd come clear across Texas to find. He looked older, harder, and I wondered if he'd changed as much as I had. It'd



been six years since he'd left the home ranch to seek adventure and a whole lot had happened to a lot of folks in that time... There'd been a Civil war.

After I gave orders about the feed for my big black, who was called Satan, for good reason, I started up the raised planked sidewalk fronting the business houses and the bank. The wooden awning was some protection against the sun, but it sure felt like a bake oven.

Drago tied his horse beside the team at the hitching rail in front of the mercantile, then he helped the girl down from the buckboard and they went inside. For all I knew, she could be my new sister-in-law, though that idea seemed mighty strange. Drago had always been one to ride alone. He used to like to cut up with the dance hall girls, but he wasn't ever likely to get serious.

Crossing the street, I tried to whip the dust out of my black pants with my hat. My flannel shirt was too travel-stained to do much about, but I adjusted my gun belt and let it go at that. I was right excited about seeing Drago and I wasn't going to put our meeting off any longer, whether the girl was his wife or not.

I pushed open the door and blinked to accustom my eyes to the dimness. The two of them were talking to the clerk and I stood there listening for a minute. The girl, in a slim-waisted dress and red gold hair, was doing all the talking.

"Oh, stop arguing, Drago," she ordered imperiously and I drew in my breath. There never had been anyone alive who talked to Drago like that, excepting Pa, and he always caused a fight between them. "I know exactly what my father wants," she said.

All my brother did was nod and he stepped back a little so I could see him better. He *had* changed. He was leaner and his face harder and more controlled. Then he said real quiet like, "Sure, you know, Miss Emily."

I STIFFENED with anger, because her voice had held an insulting kind of arrogance, as though Drago were dirt under her feet. I'd never heard any female brush his opinions aside like trash before, and I didn't like it one damn bit. It seemed mighty funny that Drago would stand for it. I know I would have turned and walked away from her and kept right on walking.

She handed a list to the clerk and said, "Drago will pick it up in an hour," Not *asking* him if he would, but ordering him in a round about way. To tell the truth, I felt real embarrassed for him.

The girl wanted to brush past me, but I stood where I was and didn't move, so she couldn't. Her eyes flashed into mine. Then I got a feeling that I'd seen those blue eyes and the tilt of her tawny head before.

"Remember me, Drago?" I said and moved into more light. He frowned, studying me, and I laughed and said, "It's Chris."

"Chris!" he echoed. Then we were pounding each other's back and both of us were talking at once.

A cold, annoyed voice broke into our reunion. "I'm waiting, Drago," the girl said like she was royalty. "You know I'm in a hurry."

Our laughter fell away. I looked at her and her eyes flashed into mine again. "You're real i m p a t i e n t, Ma'am," I said. "I'm Chris Rawle and Drago's my brother. We haven't seen each other in years. It would seem like you could go away on your own business and leave us in peace."

Her face was white with anger. "I'm Emily Bartlett," she informed me. "And Drago's my father's foreman. I don't care if you haven't seen each other since you both fell out of the cradle."

To my amazement, Drago looked uncomfortable. "Suppose I meet you at the buckboard in an hour, Miss Emily," he said and there was no

denying he kept looking down at the floor.

Everybody in Texas knew the vast Bar B ranch and being foreman of it was a big job, and I didn't want to do anything to spoil it for Drago. If he wanted to keep it bad enough to crawl around for this snip of a daughter, that was his business.

"I'll hang around for a few days," I told him. "So we can meet at the hotel when you got free time."

Drago smiled. "You'll get your horse and ride out to the Bar B with us." He side-glanced at Emily. "Mr. Bartlett will be pleased you turned up. You'll like the boss." There'd been no emphasis on "the boss" but Emily colored.

"I'm leaving in an hour, Drago," she said coolly. "Be ready." Her eyes slid over me in disdain. I don't think she missed one speck of dust or perspiration stain. Her skirts flounced a little as she walked out the door.

I was smiling when I turned back to Drago. There was something so steely cold in his face that I felt a chill and my smile was gone. I'd seen gun slingers who had that same still look before their hands streaked for their guns.

There was a moment's silence before I said too heartily, "Well, come on, let's wet our throats."

"We got something to celebrate," Drago agreed.

THE OASIS across the street was empty, since most folks had sense enough to *siesta* during the torrid heat of the day. Drago took a bottle and glasses from the barkeep and we went back to a table.

Drago poured and we raised our glasses in a silent toast. The raw liquor cut the dust in my throat. Drago shoved back his hat and studied me.

"You don't look much like the kid I left," he finally said. "And you're the last *hombre* I expected to see around here." He gulped his drink.

"I wanted to find you a lot sooner," I told him. "But things kind of piled up."

"Yeah," he said, "they do." He poured himself another drink and pushed the bottle toward me. "There're a lot of things happened we don't need to go into, Chris. That's all the past." He smiled with his lips, but it didn't warm the bleakness in his eyes. "I've been ramroding the Bar B for several years and you couldn't find a better boss than Amos Bartlett." He took the makings out of his shirt pocket and rolled a cigarette. "And if I do say so, you couldn't find a better foreman in Texas than me. It's a big job I'm doing." There was pride in his voice. "Amos made a fortune by selling beef to the Army during the war. He owns d a m n e d near everything around these parts and he lets me run the ranch my own way." His face hardened. "It's too bad his daughter ain't human."

Six years change a lot of things and it was only natural that Drago and I had to get acquainted again. He was five years older, and six years ago, when he left home, that had made a lot of difference. I used to think Drago was about the greatest man I ever saw, on account of the way he could fork a horse and shoot a gun. I used to think there was no one faster on the draw.

Somehow, I didn't like to ask him what he'd done in the war. It was a man's own business what side he fought for. "Pa," I told him, "gave all his money to the cause. He even sold the ranch for it." Drago's eyes raked my face. "He died broke, like a hell of a lot of Texans did."

"That wasn't real smart, was it?" Drago said without much, if any interest.

Drago and I had different Ma's. His died when he was a little shaver and it was my Ma who brought him up. I often wondered if Drago would have gone off hunting adventure if Ma had

lived. Seeing him again was bringing back a mighty lot of things I'd forgotten. Little, unimportant things that all added up to the old ranch and home.

"You been drifting?" he asked.

"Mostly," I smiled. "After the hostilities finished, if they ever are, I was restless. Seemed like no place could hold me long. A job to get a little money, then I'd drift along."

"No girl?" Drago laughed silently.

"No time," I laughed too. "I never lit in one place long enough. Then, suddenly, one day I got fed up. I got sick of being a saddle tramp and I wanted to settle down on a ranch of my own." I looked at him levelly. "That's when I started looking for you, Drago." He stared back at me, his face expressionless. "I thought you might like to throw in with me, unless you had something a lot better to do." I poured a drink. I studied the table because I didn't want him to know how much I'd counted on him going partners, how much I wanted it to be like family again. "Well," I said casually, "You got something better."

THE WHISKEY tasted sour. I knew now I'd been chasing memories, but a man can get damn lonely after a war. Drago had made a new life and forgotten most of the past. Hell, he'd hardly recognized me today. It's been a long, long ride, I decided. But worth it, because it ended a sentimental journey.

Drago shoved back his chair. "Wait here and I'll finish the chores. The old man wanted a new fangled handsaw, but Emily argued." His mouth twisted. "I'll go exchange the one she picked out."

"Why do you take that kind of talk from her?" I asked. "You let her treat you like dirt. And, brother, that ain't the way you used to be."

He looked steadily at me. "First," he said in a flinty tone, "there's Amos. Second, she'll get all that's coming to her one fine day." There was that still coldness in him again that made me sorry for Emily Bartlett. I could see my brother had developed into a waiting man, and they're the dangerous ones.

"I just can't see how a man could put up with her for years," I said.

"You got it wrong, Chris," he informed me. "She just got here six months ago. She left when her Ma died and she was about eleven. She's been brought up in New Orleans by Amos' sister. No," he said flatly, "she ain't been here very long." He slapped me on the back and went out.

I decided Amos must be a real fine man, or Drago would have thrown the ramrod's job in his face when Emily came. If my brother ever did quit and join up with me, it probably would be Emily I'd have to thank. Her aunt had made one beautiful arrogant witch out of her, all right.

Then I snapped my fingers as I remembered. I'd thought I'd seen those blue eyes and that tilt of a tawny head before. And I had, in a completely different setting.

It had been in St. Louis, where I'd just been paid off by a small wagon train for riding scout for them from Santa Fe. I was down at the dock with half the town, waiting for the *Prairie Belle* up from New Orleans. I was gawking, with the rest of them, when the passengers came down the gangplank. There were some real pretty girls whose complexions would be ruined by the hot winds and the western sun. All kinds and shapes came down that gangplank, adventurers, traders, dance hall girls, entertainers, gamblers, families, gentlemen and a few ladies.

There was the usual waterfront bustle of unloading wares, trading goods and supplies for the wagon trains. There was the usual din of voices. And then I noticed that not all the passengers had disembarked. There was still one on deck, a girl with red gold hair peeking out from under her bonnet and the bluest eyes I ever saw. I particularly noticed the

tilt of her head as she watched the milling sweating crowd below her on the dock. There was an arrogance about the way she held it that, I remember I thought, wouldn't last long if she were to become a real and integral part of the west. It's a raw, tough land that can break a girl like her.

She turned as an older man in a frock coat and high hat and a lady in crinolines came to her side. They spoke together for a few minutes, then the three of them made their way down the gangplank. I canted a hip on a crate and watched her, wondering who she was and where she was going...

- 2 -

RIGHT AS Emily Bartlett walked toward where I was, one of the dance hall girls I knew came up to me and put her hand on my arm. I forgot about the blue-eyed girl, except that it still struck me as mighty funny that we'd run into each other again, and that she was a cattle baron's daughter and more arrogant even than she'd appeared that day on the *Prairie Belle*.

I poured a drink. The heiress to the Bar B was as contemptible a girl as I'd ever seen, judging by her attitude toward my brother. Nobody ought to treat another human like dirt and I decided I'd steer clear of Emily Bartlett.

That set me to thinking about her father. And, again, I decided Amos Bartlett must be about as fine as they come or Drago wouldn't take her insolence. And he'd sure changed. The Drago I used to know would have bawled her out so bad she'd never forget it, then go draw his pay.

After I settled up with the barkeep, I went on outside and found Drago hauling groceries to the buckboard. I started to pitch in and help him, but he said he was on his last load and for me to go get my horse.

"You sure it'll be all right with the lady?" I grinned.

Drago's mouth tightened. "Get your horse, Chris," he ordered.

My eyes narrowed at his tone, then I shrugged and walked down to the livery. He had enough on his mind without my acting proddy. I couldn't help but wonder why Emily couldn't have driven the buckboard in alone for supplies? You'd think the Bar B foreman would have more important things to do than wet nurse a spoiled, no-account girl.

I'd scarcely gotten in my saddle before the buckboard went flying past me. Drago and I rode down the street in Emily's dust, though we weren't running our horses the way she was.

Drago looked over my big black and there was admiration in his eyes. "That's quite a horse," he said.

I patted the satin smooth neck. "He's plenty mean," I admitted. "That's why I call him Satan." I smiled.

It was while we rode along that Drago filled me in on Amos Bartlett and his problems: His father had been the first settler in this part of Texas and named the place where he camped the first night, Bartlett Wells. The old man built up a big herd running to thousands of longhorns, and helped himself to all the land he wanted. During the war with Mexico the ranch had suffered some, but he recouped his losses and the ranch got bigger than ever. Amos had been brought up to believe he was King of the range and that his word was law.

It was at the peak of his father's greatness that Amos inherited the great Bar B. Nobody in the Territory questioned the Bar B's supremacy and no king ever ruled with a firmer, surer hand. Those were the good years.

Later, small ranchers filtered in be-

cause of the lush grazing land and the plentiful water. Slowly, they edged into what Amos considered his land and, since he owned the bank at Bartlett Wells, he gradually began foreclosing on the ranchers' mortgages which the bank held. When small ranchers needed money for further development, Amos refused the loans. When a rancher, sick and discouraged, gave it up, it was Amos who took over his spread. He became more and more unpopular in the region until more than a few men hated him violently.

"He's hard," Drago admitted. "But he acts as he thinks best. He feels that he saves some of the ranchers from further losses, the ones who were doomed to failure from the beginning."

AS HE TALKED, I began to wonder if Drago didn't have a touch of hero worship in admiration of Amos Bartlett's ability. I knew it pointed up the weakness and laziness of our own father, who'd been content with a small ranch and herd. Pa's easy-going way had always angered Drago.

Ahead, Emily turned to look back at us. "Why the escort?" I asked. "Can't she go to town alone?"

"Amos is afraid, like I am, that one of his enemies might act up with her," Drago said. "He wants to avoid anything unpleasant right now. You see, Chris, he's going to run for State Senator."

My smile twisted. "If he squeezes the ranchers how can he hope to get their votes?" I asked. "He don't act too smart."

Drago's eyes clashed with mine. "Amos Bartlett will get what he wants."

"By buying votes?"

Drago's bronzed face tightened and his voice was edgy. "He's the best man for the job," he stated flatly. "Besides, votes come from all over, not just around Bartlett Wells."

I shut up. It wasn't any of my business and I sure didn't want to make my brother sore the first day. But I couldn't help but wonder if Amos Bartlett would make a good representative for the *people*. If he'd ever have their welfare at heart, or only his own. To him, the men who came to settle here were interlopers, people to be frozen out, or driven off.

The cattle barons are rugged individualists, feudal in their thought and action. It is almost impossible for them to live in a cooperative society with smaller ranchers. It galled them to have to recognize rights of other men. And in order to become a State Senator, Bartlett would have to change his whole attitude. I don't like a man who does that just so he'll win. I could sure see where Emily got her arrogance, but knowing it didn't make me like her any better.

We'd been riding for some time now, through fine graze land which stretched as far as the eye could see. In the distance, we saw herds of fine sleek cattle grazing. Emily, I noticed, sat straight on the wagon seat, her back stiff. It would be tough always being the princess, if you didn't love it the way Emily must.

She'd campaign for her father, but she'd have to learn to unbend. I doubted if she could make it seem sincere, because I could see she didn't like us common folks.

"I suppose," I said to Drago, "she's got a lot of beaux who want to marry the Bar B."

Drago said gruffly, "Every man who was single in this part of the state came around after she got home. She didn't seem to pay them any mind." He pointed to a ranch house way off to the right. "Ruth Patton, her best friend, lives there. She's a real fine girl, though she's going to marry Spike Loomis who runs the Rocking W, and he's the push behind the faction out to defeat Amos."

"That must make it nice for the girls," I said.

"It's not good. This is Bar B." He nodded at the big overhead wooden sign on top the fence posts bearing the

Bar B brand and Amos Bartlett under it.

Emily turned the buckboard up the wagon road. We must have ridden fifteen miles before the low adobe house stretched out wide and deep in front of us. It could have withstood raids during the Mexican war. The cottonwoods afforded yard shade not only in front but to the many outbuildings, beyond which were the corrals.

WE CAUGHT up with Emily and I helped her down out of the wagon. "Thank you," she said icily. Some of the hands came to unload and she barely glanced at them as she went into the house.

A real friendly girl, I thought derisively. One to warm a man's heart.

After Drago finished introducing me around, we went to the spacious bunkhouse. I dumped my bed roll, then I went to the wash shack to shave and clean up.

I was putting on a clean shirt when one of the men yelled, "Hey, Drago, the boss wants you."

"Come on," he said and I followed him back to the big house with its foot-deep recessed windows.

Emily was in the big main room, but as we stepped inside the house she left it. Amos Bartlett was about six-one, almost as tall as I am and a lot heavier. He had a fine looking head with thick black hair cut with a streak of silver, which added to his distinguished appearance. His appraisal of me was shrewd and quick. Here was a man who made up his mind fast, then acted. Even if he were wrong, I doubted if he could change course once he'd embarked on one. I don't suppose a man brought up as a king of all he surveys can ever learn much humility. There was no softness in him, and it would bother him about as much as swatting a bothersome fly to have to foreclose a mortgage. There was pride in his bearing, the kind of pride that would keep him going until he dropped. All these things I thought as I looked at him while Drago introduced me.

His handshake was hard and firm, though his smile didn't reach up into the cold grayness of his eyes. He was very cordial to me when he made me welcome, urging me to stay as long as I could. Then he told Drago to take what time he could off, to be with me.

"Emily!" he shouted and she came to the door. "Tell Maria that Drago and Chris will stay for supper." He went to his office and came back with whiskey and glasses. "Sit down," he told me and gestured expansively. "My house is yours," he said. I bowed in acknowledgment, like a Spanish Don.

Frankly, I hadn't expected to be accepted like this and because of it, I could see he thought a whole lot of Drago. I knew my brother wouldn't want to pull up stakes here and go ranching on a small scale with me. I didn't think I'd stay around for long.

Just before supper was laid by the housekeeper, Emily returned. I stared. She'd put on a red-gold wide skirted dress, that matched her tawny hair, and it was tied around the waist with a velvet ribbon the blue of her eyes. The off-the-shoulder bodice was well fitted over small, uplifted breasts and she carried a pretty little fan. I decided she must think she was still in New Orleans.

She met my eyes and pink showed in her face because of my frank admiration. She might be intolerably rude, but she was a beauty. She knew it and flaunted it, as though to let us know she wasn't for the likes of us. For her we didn't exist as men. I've known dance hall girls I respected a hell of a lot more.

MR. BARTLETT rose and escorted her to a high back Spanish chair with old world courtesy, then he went on talking. It was nice to see the rapt attention she gave her father and a fool could see the two of them adored each other.

I sat across from her at the long

supper table and I couldn't keep my eyes off her. Lordy, but she was beautiful! It was then I decided I'd teach her a few manners before I left. Probably no man could teach her kindness, but she could learn to hide some of her contempt and arrogance.

"Are you staying here long?" she asked as if she'd read my mind.

"That depends, Ma'am," I said.

Amos set down his coffee cup. "I've been thinking I could use you, Chris," he said, "if you want to go on my payroll."

"Sorry," I said. "But thanks."

He ignored what I'd just said. "I can use you on my campaign trips."

"Sorry," I repeated. "But I'm on a vacation." I didn't want to help him get to be a State Senator. I wasn't sure about his value to the people of Texas. At present, I didn't think he'd do any kind of a job for them.

Emily looked amused. "I don't think Chris likes us," she said and it was my turn to feel my ears burn. "But he'll do what you want eventually, Papa. They always do." She said it with so much bored certainty that I boiled.

It was fine by me if Drago wanted to take this kind of thing, but I didn't have to. "I'll stay my own man, Ma'am," I said.

Her eyes clashed with mine again, then she laughed and it sounded like a merry little brook rippling over rocks. It surprised me it had such a nice sound. "Suppose you go riding with me tomorrow, Chris," she said and Drago looked startled.

Amos Bartlett pushed back his chair. "I have business with Drago, if you two will excuse us." My brother followed him into the office and closed the door.

Emily toyed with her coffee spoon, obviously waiting for me to say something. Once she looked at me, her eyes brimming with amusement.

"I saw you in St. Louis," I told her and knew I was a fool. "You got off the *Prairie Belle*."

"You remembered? I'm surprised, considering all the girls you must have known—and seen." Her voice was sharp and I stared at her. "I know your kind," she said. "Any man as attractive as you, is certain to think all women will fall at his feet. But not all of them will, Chris Rawle, that I promise you. Now, if you'll excuse me."

"Gladly," I said and before she could pick up her fan, I left the room. I closed the heavy door behind me, glad for the cool fresh air.

To say I was puzzled was sure mild for what I felt. I suspected some underhanded game, because the idea of Emily Bartlett telling me I was all that attractive was laughable. I was no great shakes with the ladies. In the first place, while I don't frighten dogs and horses, no female has ever said much about my looks. I'm tall and lean, and if you like black hair and eyes and a knife scar cutting from my forehead to my left ear, I might get along all right.

I suspected Emily wanted me to work for her father and, for some reason, thought having seen and remembered me on the dock in St. Louis would help turn the trick. Emily Bartlett had a hell of a lot to learn.

IT WAS MY night for surprises, because Emily followed me out of the house and called before I was half way to the bunkhouse. She came off the porch and we met under the cottonwoods. This girl could change like a chameleon. Now, she was soft and seductive and meant me no good. I expect she could make most men like mush when she wanted, and her tactics would have amused me if they hadn't been kind of insulting to my intelligence. I'll admit she made me tingle up my spine when the moonlight shone down on her bare shoulders.

"Are you riding with me tomorrow?" she asked.

"I'd thought I'd go along with Drago."

She put her hand on my arm. "I can show you all he can," she said.

"You could show me a whole lot more, Ma'am." I laughed. "You win. But I'm going to be frank. I know why you're giving me the softening-up treatment and so long as you know I know, it's okay."

I waited for the explosion, but none came. There was only tightening of her lovely red lips to show she'd heard. We were standing close to each other, when the front door opened again. Drago stopped short when he saw us, then turned to cross the yard toward the bunkhouse.

"Hold it," I called. "Good night, Ma'am. I'll be ready to ride in the morning." I left her under the trees.

Drago was silent until we reached the bunkhouse door. "I think you ought to take up Amos' offer," he told me. "There's no sense in your drifting around like you've been doing. Pa would hate it. And Amos will pay real good." He hesitated and looked kind of sheepish. "And I'd kind of like you to stick around."

"I'll see," I said and clapped him on the shoulder. It felt good that he wanted me.

His next words jolted me with their bitterness. "Emily's a witch," he said.

We went inside where I met more of the crew and we played poker. But when the lights were out, and I was lying in my bunk, I thought about what Drago said about Emily and his hard bitterness. It came to me like a bolt of lightening that Drago would like to marry her, because she could give him the Bar B. He thought only Emily stood in the way of his ambition. I think I felt a little sad.

Then I remembered that he'd said that someday she'd get what was coming to her. And my brother was a waiting man! Probably he thought he was big enough to put her in her place, once he got the chance. I wasn't so sure he was, but I knew he'd die trying. It was hard to tell if he honestly loved her, or only what she represented. I'd have to stay awhile longer to answer that.

- 3 -

NEXT MORNING, instead of riding with Drago like I wanted, I stayed behind when he and the boys rode out to relieve the night crew. At the corral a rannie was breaking a bronc and I was laughing at the way they were going around and around, when Emily joined me. She was slim and beautiful in a riding skirt and bright green blouse.

"Ready?" she asked and apparently had decided to be nice and pleasant today.

"Sure, Ma'am," I told her and decided I'd be pleasant too. "Where do we ride?"

"I thought cross country, to one of our line camps." Her smile was warm and there was a kind of sparkle in her eyes when she called to one of the men to bring her horse.

I whistled when I saw her magnificent sorrel, who pranced and whirled when she got into the saddle. While I untied Satan, she dug her spurs in and took off, leaving me behind. Showing off, I thought sourly, and stepped into my own saddle. Fiery Satan didn't need any urging to race. He plunged, then pounded down the road after the sorrel.

This horse of mine can go like the devil and he had the power to stay with it. Some fine horse flesh had raced him and ended up eating his dust. If Emily were trying to prove her superiority, she'd picked a bad way to do it.

Then she glanced back over her shoulder in amazement, that I was right behind. She dug in her spurs, acknowledging that the race was on, and sped across the rangeland with

me at her heels. Jack rabbits leaped out of our way and gophers stayed down in their holes as we thundered through the grass. Satan caught the sorrel and passed him, then I pulled up slowly to a walk.

Emily was flushed with excitement when she came up and rode close beside Satan so she could pat his neck. "He's wonderful," she cried. "Oh, my, how I'd like to own him."

"So would a lot of folks." I smiled. "There's nothing wrong with your own."

"I know." She eyed Satan. "I'd still love to own yours."

We headed away from where the herds grazed and walked for a while to blow out our horses. Beyond us a couple of miles was a bluff, the sun painting it vivid red and yellow. Windstunted mesquite and sage grew sparsely and boulders faced the steep sides.

"I'll show you an old cave," Emily said. "During the Mexican war raiding parties used it for a headquarters."

"And today it's still probably used by raiding parties." I squinted into the sun. "Do you have much rustling?"

"Not so much it bothers us. The Bar B runs so many longhorns we expect a certain amount of it," she said.

It would be true. What were a hundred or so head if you run thirty to forty thousand cattle? I glanced at Emily and was glad she was in a good humor, it was making the ride a lot better.

We wove around the lowest rung of the boulders and finally she pulled up. There was a cave and we dismounted to inspect it's cool depths.

Outside again in the sunlight, she stood looking across the acres of her vast land, her head held as though she were surveying her own kingdom, which I guess she was. For some reason it irritated me. I had a sudden overpowering desire to wipe out her smug self-satisfaction.

I MOVED to her, turned her around and took her into my arms. There was no gentleness in me when I found her mouth, which was soft and sweet. Though she struggled furiously at first, she stopped. I hardly noticed. The blood was pounding in my temples as it ran wild through my veins. My breath was ragged as I hungrily kissed the tip of her ears, her throat and her bewitching lips.

At last, I stepped back and shook my head in disbelief that I'd wanted to kiss her. About all the excuse I had was that my desire had suddenly become too strong.

Emily cracked her whip across my face. "How dare you kiss a Bartlett?" she stormed. The rage and arrogance blazed from her.

I put my hand to my cheek and looked at her. She was shaking with fury. *Bartlett*, why, the way she said that name you'd have thought it was some kind of god. To save my life I couldn't help it, I burst out laughing. It surely wasn't the proper thing to do after I'd almost assaulted the girl, but she was so doggone funny.

For a minute, Emily looked at me as if I was demented. Then she swung up in the saddle and looked down scornfully at me. "I am waiting," she spaced her words, "for an apology."

Somehow, I managed to quit laughing and I stepped to her side. "I'm really sorry, Ma'am," I said. "I'm generally a whole lot more particular about whom I kiss." Our eyes held. "Ma'am, don't you ever use that tone of voice to me again. I'm not Drago. I won't take it. The next time you use it on me, so help me, I'm going to give you the spanking, Ma'am, that's been long overdue."

I dodged the flick of the whip. Then she wheeled her horse, his hooves making sparks on the stones, and rode off. When I was sure she was headed toward home, I veered off cross-country to try to find Drago. Of course, now I'd have to move into town, but it wouldn't be for long. In another day or two I'd head on south and find myself a little spread. To tell the truth, I'd

had all I wanted of the Bar B—and Emily.

One of the riders guarding a herd told me where to locate my brother and I rode through cattle which grazed for miles around. I found him at the number 2 line camp and we had noon dinner at the chuck wagon with the riders.

Afterwards, we all sat around in the shade smoking and spinning each other tall tales. Finally, the men got back to work at the horse corrals and a few went off to replenish the salt supply.

I hunkered down beside Drago. "I'm going to move on in to the hotel," I said. "Amos might be fine, but I'm not like you, I can't take Emily."

He eyed me coldly. "Suppose we leave her out of it." His voice was deadly quiet.

"Fine by me," I agreed and went to tighten the cinch on Satan. If he loved that girl I sure pitied him. It was evident that Amos Bartlett liked my brother, but that didn't mean he'd like him for a son-in-law. I had a hunch that even if Emily loved Drago, her father would never allow her to marry him. It would gall him too much for his *foreman* to marry his only daughter and know that his empire would go to Drago. Of course, I could be dead wrong, but I didn't think so.

I WAS ALMOST certain my brother didn't figure it that way. He thought Emily alone stood in his way. It was a bad situation that could only get worse, and I was glad now I wouldn't be around to see the outcome.

Drago rode with me back to the ranch house and waited while I went in to make my manners. Marie told me the boss had ridden into Bartlett Wells and wouldn't be back until late. Emily wasn't anywhere in sight, so I let that go.

When I went back outside I thought I saw a curtain move at Emily's bedroom window. I think she watched me fasten on my blanket roll.

Drago said, "I'll be in tomorrow, Chris."

That was that. I rode off the Bar B without a backward look, or a regret. Halfway to town I saw the ranch house that Drago had pointed out as belonging to Ruth Patton, that friend of Emily's. A rider cut into the road and pulled up and waited for me.

"Howdy, stranger." His smile was real friendly. "I'm Spike Loomis, owner of the Rocking W."

"Chris Rawle, Drago's brother," I told him and remembered he was heading up the anti-Bartlett faction. I liked his looks, but his eyes were considerably less friendly when he found out who I was. It's a good idea to always get the other side of the story if you can, and I wanted Spike Loomis to talk. I leaned on my saddle horn. "Bartlett asked me to go campaigning with him, but I turned him down."

Spike glanced at my two six guns and half smiled. "Reckon Amos will have use for those," he said. "You look like you're right handy with them." His voice got harsh. "The sooner that *hombre* gets it through his thick skull that nobody with any decent thought about the future is going to elect him, the better." His eyes narrowed. "With one hand Amos promises that we should have a Cattleman's Association so we can get a fair and square deal with our grievances. With the other hand, he forces some poor devil out of ranching." Spike shook his head. "It's too bad you don't join up and help us. We're the group who may need a good gun. It'll look bad for Amos if his own community goes against him at the polls. It'll hurt him, but he don't seem to think about that. He talks with a forked tongue, like the Indians say."

I was tempted, real tempted to throw in with Spike Loomis and his crowd. Only Drago being foreman of the Bar B stopped me. It would be a whole lot better for me to ride on.

When we reached town, Spike must have read my thoughts, because he

stretched out his hand after we hitched our horses in front of the hotel. "If you change your mind, Chris, and decide to help us protect the people of Texas from a sidewinder, you let me know." He half saluted and strode on down the sidewalk.

After checking in, I took my saddle bags upstairs to a room overlooking the street. Then I took Satan to the livery and gave the old man there instructions about his feed.

Lights were coming on now in the town, and last minute shoppers were hurrying along. Three cowboys rode in to hitch up at the Oasis and a buckboard rattled down the street. Later on, I'd find me a poker game and if Drago came we'd have a few drinks.

JUST THEN I caught sight of Amos, who was walking along slowly with a woman by his side. Light from the mercantile shone on them and I saw she was pretty. The attention she was giving to Amos was unmistakable, so was the possessive way she held his arm. Well, I thought and smiled, he didn't care if the whole town knew it. This must have been of long-standing and I wondered what Emily thought about it, and if it had been her fault he hadn't married the woman.

He saw me and stopped. "Meet Miss Roxanne Defoe." He made a gallant gesture of his bow. "This is Drago's brother, Chris," he said. "Miss Defoe owns the hat shop here, though I guess I don't have to mention it." He smiled and motioned to the flowered one she was wearing.

Her eyes were warm and seemed a little glad when she welcomed me to Bartlett Wells. She said, "I hear you're riding the circuit with Amos when he goes campaigning."

I smiled. "You heard wrong, Ma'am."

Amos laughed indulgently. "Pay him no mind," he said genially. "He'll come along, you'll see."

If he'd been alone I would have told him off. As it was I held on to my temper. But it made me tired the way he thought he could shove people around to his liking. Somewhere along the line he'd made a mistake about me and not read me right.

"I rode in with Spike Loomis," I told him and didn't add anything more.

Amos Bartlett turned brick red. "That no account scalawag," he boomed. "He thinks he can force my hand. Watch me, Chris. Watch me show him who's boss around these parts."

"No, Amos," Roxanne said soothingly. "Don't get all riled up over nothing." Then she said good-bye to me and urged him down the street.

For a moment, I stood looking after them. She was a small, nice looking woman, but I wondered about her history. Amos could have taken her out of a traveling show, or a dance hall and set her up in business, I decided. She looked like she'd lived a lot and found a kind of peace now. At least, he'd given her that and, for some reason, I was glad. Roxanne would be good for any man with her calm, and the gentleness in her voice.

I walked over to the Oasis and looked around. Spike was at the bar and I joined him. Before he said much, he introduced me to the cowhands who were standing there. After a few drinks, we went down to the cafe for supper. I couldn't help but admire Spike for not talking about Amos to me and pressing his own cause.

When he was in the saddle to go home, he stuck out his hand again. "Anytime, Chris, you want to fight for what's right, come and see me."

For most of that night, while I played poker, I tried to put his words out of my mind.

During the course of that evening, I picked up a lot of talk about Amos Bartlett. Some men grumbled, some had anger deep in them, mostly they felt hamstrung by his power. The talk was that, though he'd proposed a Cattleman's Association, he veered away

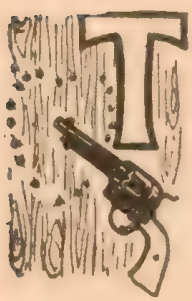
from it when cornered. And most of the ranchers and townsmen knew that if they got an Association it wouldn't do them much good, unless Amos' power was broken. He'd control that, just as he controlled everything else. There, too, his word would be law.

I didn't know any way to break that power, unless through Emily. Instantly, I knew that was a foolish idea. There was no appealing to her better nature because, as far as I knew, she hadn't any. Otherwise, when her best friend Ruth, and the man she loved tried to make Amos see the viewpoint of the small ranchers, Emily would have thrown in with them.

I wondered how Amos slept nights but, then, hard men always sleep. He had no conscience. He was the law.

The funny thing was that I was the one who didn't sleep too well. I kept remembering the soft warmth of Emily's lips when I kissed her. Then I touched my cheek and felt the sting of her riding whip again. I reckon I smiled in the darkness.

- 4 -



THE NEXT morning I walked around town and talked some more politics to everybody. I found no one who wanted Amos to represent him in the Legislature, but most of them admitted that he'd get their votes. Too many men owed money to Amos' bank and had no choice..

Drago didn't get into town until late that afternoon and he was in a black glowering mood. I didn't question him and finally in the saloon he burst out with it.

"Amos had a big row last night at the house with Spike Loomis. He threw him out bodily." Drago shook his head. "I don't like it. Amos is madder than hell." He laughed shortly. "I wouldn't want to be in Spike's shoes, because he's in real trouble."

"But what can Bartlett do to him just because Spike's against his election," I asked. "He can't shut Spike up."

Drago rubbed his hand along his jaw. "Let's stop talking about it. And, you remember this, Amos is right."

"That's what you think," I said, angry at my brother for thinking as he did. We glared at each other and I suddenly laughed. It broke the tension between us.

"You sure don't act nice, do you?" Drago said and then he shrugged. "We're going to meet Emily at the church social," he informed me. "Can I get cleaned up in your room?"

"Sure," I said and stared at him. "Only I'm not going to meet Emily at any church social. I'm the last one she'd want to meet her."

My brother looked a little confused about it. "The funny thing is, you're wrong. She does."

"I'm afraid I can't believe you."

"She liked you, Chris." He sounded as if he didn't want to believe it. "She told me to bring you, but that she'd never known a man who could be so insolent. I guess she's right." His eyes bore into mine. "I don't know what happened between you two, but she told me to bring you along. I wish just *once* she wanted *me* somewhere." He sounded bitter again.

There wasn't any answer I could make. Curiosity alone caused me to walk with Drago down to the residential street with its white cupola church at the end. This, I thought, could be a real nice town if it didn't have to knuckle under to the Bartletts.

For an instant, I almost wished I was one of the robbing bands that roamed and raided other parts of Texas. Then I could break in and burn every scrap of paper in the bank's safe and in Amos' desk at the ranch, and people could be free. It was an idea I could never make work. Like

the rest of them, I couldn't do anything but wish.

Just before we reached the church and the lantern lit yard, I told Drago, "I reckon I won't stay long. If you decide to break away, you'll find me playing cards at the Oasis." I smiled. "Seems like I'm being real lucky with poker."

From his expression, I doubted if he'd come. Again, he was wet nursing Emily and, for all I knew, he liked it. He'd changed a lot. But there was no use me raising a fever over it.

A bevy of girls in pretty dresses moved about like butterflies. Some were at tables selling their wares to raise money for the church, others milled around. Most of the men were self-consciously grouped around the lemonade bowl in the side yard. Quite a few I'd met, and they seemed friendly when Drago and I joined them, after saying Howdee to the minister and his missus.

AFTER A while, I looked around for Roxanne, then I realized I was making a mistake. She wouldn't be welcome here, I decided, and she probably was as nice a lady as you'd find.

Emily came through the gate alone. If she'd looked wonderful before, it was nothing to what she looked now. Only even I knew she was overdressed. She looked like she was ready for a party in New Orleans or St. Louis, and all the other girls seemed self conscious in their simple handmade muslins and cambrics.

A dark-haired girl went up to Emily and they stood talking. "That's Ruth," Drago told me. "Spike's girl."

She was nice looking and a man would trust her at first sight. She'd taken Emily's hand and was leading her to the side and I was startled. It was unbelievable, but Emily looked kind of embarrassed and uncomfortable. Against my good judgment, I pitied her. For all I knew, she didn't fit in with Texas ways, and I blamed her father for a lot of it. I had a hunch Emily knew she was the one dressed wrong for tonight.

"Come on," Drago said gruffly and we walked across the yard to join the girls. I felt mighty nervous, because I didn't know what Emily would say. It's true she told Drago to bring me, but that could have been because she wanted to bawl me out for kissing her in front of everybody. One thing sure about Emily, you had no idea what she'd do next.

When she looked at me, her smile was hesitant and I thought I caught a deep glow in her eyes. It was wrong, I knew that, but I couldn't help feeling good that she hadn't forgotten our kiss either. Hell, any man would have left just like I did.

Ruth was real friendly to me and I wasn't surprised when she told me Spike said he'd met me. I guess she was trying to act especially nice so I'd maybe join up with her side. If Emily knew about her father's fight with Spike last night, she gave no indication of it. We all talked about how nice the lights looked and what a big crowd was here and how pretty all the girls were. Just talk.

Drago and I bought a lot of pincushions and aprons and fudge to give the girls. When their arms were loaded Emily said, "Would you mind if we put these things back so they can sell them again?"

"The church needs all the money we can raise," Ruth said and we went back and returned the stuff.

For some reason, it bothered me that it had been Emily who'd suggested it. I suppose, because it seemed out of character. It was something I hadn't believed she'd ever think about.

It was a pleasant get-together, that's so important in ranch life. Women live far distances from each other and it's seldom that they get a chance to visit. Men stood in groups talking cattle prices and the coming elections, while

the women gossiped and the children played tag around the yard.

I GUESS I was the first to hear the horse galloping fast up the street. The urgency in it made me tighten up. Then a man slid out of the saddle and made straight for Drago, who left us and went a ways off.

"That's one of our riders," Emily said and her eyes were worried.

I walked over to my brother and the Bar B man. Drago grabbed my arm. "Spike's foreman, Will Grant, was found shot to death on the range near Spike's house," he said. "Amos wants me right away. Will you see Emily gets home?"

"I'll take care of her, you go ahead," I told him. Drago even swung up in back of his rider in order to get to his own horse at the livery quicker.

Emily and Ruth ran over to me. "What's wrong, Chris?" Emily wanted to know.

"There's been a little trouble," I told them. "And your father wanted Drago."

Emily's eyes searched mine and I could tell she wasn't satisfied with my answer. "I'm going home. Now." There was the old command in her voice, but there wasn't anything I could do about it. And it was nothing to me who she ordered around for the rest of her life.

Ruth said, "Is it all right, Chris?"

Spike was the one to tell her, so I said, "I hope so," and let it go at that.

"Wait," Emily ordered, "while I get my cloak." She was back in a couple of minutes and we started over to Main Street. "I have to change into riding clothes at the hotel, but you get our horses."

"Yes, Ma'am," I answered just like I used to do to my old sergeant in the army. Her face flushed a little, but she kept that aloof, arrogant tilt to her tawny head.

In a short time, we were riding out of town. Neither of us talked. I didn't, because I was figuring that Amos Bartlett might have engineered this killing tonight. He'd been as mad as hell at Spike last night and this might be a warning for Spike to shut up.

Then it occurred to me that Bartlett wouldn't order one of his men to shoot down Spike's foreman, he wouldn't want anybody to have that on him. That meant if Bartlett were responsible, he had to have done the shooting himself. I wondered what my brother would think of his hero now?

Emily reined up. Her eyes clung to my face and her slim body was tense. "What happened, Chris?" she demanded.

So I told her. I heard her faint gasp, then she turned her head and stared off into the night. After that, she rode faster.

The moon came up, then I stiffened and raised up in my stirrups. The moon didn't come up in that direction, so the hazy light off in the distance was something else.

"Emily!" I shouted and she slowed. "That's no moon, that's fire! What's over in that direction?" I pointed.

"It's the Rocking W. Spike's." Her voice broke and she spurred her sorrel. I thundered along beside her, wrapt up in my own somber thoughts.

Killing Spike's foreman hadn't been enough for Amos, now he had to fire the man's house! As we drew nearer we saw the flames shooting high into the air and other riders coming in from all directions.

WHEN WE reached the outskirts of Spike's yard it had become a burning inferno and I stopped Emily by a cottonwood. "You wait right here," I ordered. I stepped out of my saddle and handed her Satan's reins.

All the men were doing what they could, but nothing could save the house. As I got closer I saw they'd turned to the outbuildings in an effort to save something. Loud curses cut through the noise of the crackling fire. I saw Spike, his face smoke blackened and his eyes bloodshot and wild. I felt physically sick at this wanton distruc-

tion of a man's life and another man's work and hopes.

I ran to the pump, where the water came so slowly it was practically of no use, but I, too, joined the bucket brigade.

Then a sudden thought struck me. Was it possible that some outlaw band, such as had been maurauding, had moved into this part of Texas? Spike's foreman might have run into one of the gang and so signed his death warrant and the fire could be a warning to Spike not to tell, if he knew anything. Perhaps, just perhaps, Amos Bartlett wasn't responsible.

Spike was throwing water on a burning cook shack roof, which had ignited from sparks from the house, and I wondered what *he* thought about this night's havoc? Just then there was a shattering crash as the roof of the house collapsed, sending a shower of sparks into the sky. It was utter bedlam, men cursed as they tried desperately to save whatever they could.

Finally, there were only occasional sparks and flareups. There was the quiet that comes when a man's struggle and work lay in ashes at his feet. I hoped the horses were out of the barn, and supposed they were, since their screams hadn't pierced through the other sounds. All the men looked as drained as I felt. Right then I had but one desire, to look into Amos Bartlett's eyes and know whether he'd done this thing.

If he had, I'd force him to draw his gun. Because I would kill him.

I remembered Emily was waiting with our horses by the tree, and I patted Spike's shoulder sympathetically and went to join her. She was still holding Satan, but evidently she'd had quite a time because fire can terrorize horses.

"Let's go," I said and swung into the saddle.

"Poor Spike." Her voice was deeply sad. "Will, his foreman is killed and now this. I don't know what he and Ruth will do."

"Maybe your father can tell them," I snapped. "It could be he's back of this, after his fight with Spike last night."

For the second time, her whip slashed across my face and there was a drop of blood on my hand when I touched it. Her sorrel reared, then plunged and bolted with her. I didn't give a whoop in hell if she was thrown and lay there for the rest of her life. I was fed to the ears with the Bartletts. But there was still one thing I had to do—I had to see Amos Bartlett.

EMILY TRIED to beat me home in order to talk to her father first, but Satan was strong and as fast as the wind and he overtook her. I decided to let her ride the rest of the way home alone and I spurred ahead. I *had* to be the one to tell her father and Drago.

I beat her, as I knew I would, and slipped out of the saddle. I pushed the front door open and stood looking at my brother and Amos drinking in front of the fire. They both stared at me and Amos got up.

"Spike's burned out," I said evenly and walked close to him. I looked steadily into his eyes and didn't see any flicker of guilt. There was only surprise and shock.

"I guess some drunken hand dropped a cigarette," he said.

Drago looked shocked too. "Can I do anything?" he asked me.

"Of course not," Amos shouted at him, then he paced the floor.

"Where's Emily?" Drago demanded tersely.

It was then she burst in the door. "It was so awful, Papa," she cried. "I hate Spike, but I wouldn't have wanted anything like this to happen to him. What will he and Ruth do?"

Her father kept pacing, until he finally stopped in front of Drago. "Looks like we got ourselves some thieving renegades around here." His smile was cold. "And I got to admit they came at a right handy time for

me. Now, I'll campaign against outlaws and demand extra State rangers."

I grabbed his shirt and bunched it. "Listen to me, you dirty son. A man's foreman and friend was killed. Spike's been burned out. What are *you* going to do to help him?" Amos stiffened with outrage.

Emily yelled. "You're rotten mean, Chris."

"Easy, kid," Drago said and got up.

I paid no attention, it was Amos I wanted. "How are *you* going to help?" I repeated and shook him a little. "Spike hasn't enough money to hope to rebuild and he already owes your bank." I shoved Bartlett into a chair and his eyes blazed at me just the way his daughter's did.

She came flying at me and pounded my chest with her fists. "Get out of here," she ordered and choked in her fury. "How dare you talk to my father like that."

My laugh was short as I moved away from her. "You ought to be damn glad I didn't kill him." I put my hands on my hips, handy to my guns. "Spike's a good man," I said evenly. "He's decent and a credit to the west. I'm going to tell you something, Mr. Bartlett." His eyes bore into mine and his face was red. "If you don't tear up the notes Spike signed and lend him money to start over, I'm going to get up in the middle of your campaign speeches and blast the hell out of you for the kind of man you are."

Emily cried, "Oh, how I hate you!"

"I'm sorry, boss." Drago was uncomfortable. "Chris is just excited and blowing off his temper. The fire kind of got him going a little."

That tore my last shred of control. I clipped my brother on the jaw and waited until he crashed to the floor, then I turned and walked out.

Emily ran after me, tugging at my sleeve. "You wouldn't spoil Papa's chance of election. You couldn't be so cruel when he wants it so much." She was half sobbing.

My hands bit into her shoulders as I turned her toward me. "What kind of a girl are you?" I demanded. "It never occurred to you to help your friend Ruth and the man she's going to marry." I was suddenly tireder than I ever remembered. "What are you made of, Emily?" I asked wearily. "Besides arrogance. You look out over Texas land and see it only as your personal kingdom with you and your father its rulers. You don't even see *people* who have a right here too, just as much as you do." I guess I shook her a little. I know she was staring up at me in the moonlight, her eyes wide. "You're spoiled, and selfish and self-centered. You haven't a generous thought in your tawny head. My Lord, you don't own the sun and the moon. They're for everybody. Someday you'll learn it the hard way." I left her and got my horse.

I rode off, disgusted with my brother and the Bartletts. I felt dazed with the tragedy tonight and the kind of men who thought they could use it for their own advantage. And it was Emily's tragedy too, because she had proven her utter selfishness. I wished she wasn't the kind of girl she was. She could do so much good and be so wonderful.

- 5 -

IT WAS BRIGHT moonlight and the clumps of sage made shadows in the night. A jack-rabbit jumped in front of me and Satan shied, then galloped on in his steady rhythm. I guess I couldn't lie to myself out here under the Texas stars. And I knew I wanted Emily to be the kind of girl a man could really love.

It was late when I reached my hotel room and I pulled off my clothes and climbed into bed. I didn't want any poker tonight.

From one of the saloons there was the sound of a piano and laughter. I folded my arms under my head and stared at the ceiling. A breeze stirred the curtains.

It didn't seem plausible that Amos could be responsible for all that had happened tonight. No man could be that good an actor. And that meant that a bunch of outlaws were operating around Bartlett Wells. The cave Emily had shown me could conveniently be used again by rustlers and a marauding band. I'll admit, it didn't seem too likely, since everyone around knew about the cave, but I might pick up some signs that it had been used in the last day or so. Tomorrow I could find out.

At breakfast the next morning, everybody was talking about Will's getting killed and the fire. The men were grave. It's a serious matter when a town is threatened, as this one seemed to be, by a band of renegades. There could be all manner of depredation and nobody knew what to do, or how to do it. The sheriff, I learned, was off hunting, his whereabouts unknown.

I started out of town in the direction of the Bar B and the cave Emily had shown me. I'd almost reached the place when I saw a rider's dust coming toward me and I pulled up by a mesquite and waited. It wasn't long before I saw it was Emily and my jaw tightened.

Anybody would have to admit that she made a really pretty picture with her tawny hair flying. It wasn't quite so pretty when she stopped and glared at me. "I didn't want to see you again," she said.

"That's good, because I don't want to see you either," I told her mildly. "Especially right now." I was worried. If the outlaws were holed up in the cave, this was no place for Emily. "It would make a lot more sense if your father and some of his armed riders came this way," I told her. "Nobody knows where we'll find those renegades."

"I have a gun," she informed me coolly and I noticed it and the belt.

Who knew how well she could shoot? A bad gun is a lot worse than no gun at all. I thought I caught fear deep in her eyes. And I wondered if the same idea had struck her that had me, that the outlaws might be waiting for us in the cave.

"My father," she said haughtily in answer to my remark, "will be at the bank today, so he couldn't ride here." Quite obviously she didn't like me any more than I did her.

Then, for no good reason, I remembered our kiss and my throat tightened.

I made myself think calmly. If bad men had invaded this part of Texas, I had no concern for Emily because her house could withstand a siege, it was the small families I worried about. It seriously hurts development of a state when a town goes down in flames... A treed town is a terrible thing to see. It discouraged emigration and settlement for a long time to come.

WE RODE on toward the hills and I knew if anybody was inside the cave he could get a pot shot at us if we came straight up the steep incline. I veered off and Emily followed me, for once without an argument.

When I finally swung out of my saddle, she wanted to go with me, but I told her to stay where she was in the rocky gully. "Shoot to kill if anybody comes this way," I told her.

Then on foot, I picked my way quietly toward the cave. There wasn't any lookout and there would be one if the bandits had holed up here. I was a lot bolder the last few yards, though I did stop to listen for the neigh of a horse or voices. There was nothing.

I came out into the open at the mouth of the cave, my guns ready. There wasn't anyone around, but inside I found the marks of horses hooves in the dust and dirt, and there was the remains of a fire. How many

had been here I couldn't tell, they'd milled around too much.

A heavy load lifted. This cleared things up for me and I knew Amos Bartlett had an apology coming from me for what I'd thought about him.

Quickly, I went back to where I'd left Emily. To my complete surprise, she'd obeyed me for once, and stayed right where I'd left her.

She was pale under her honey tan and she was trembling when I said, "We had visitors all right."

Her eyes flashed. "I despise you," she said thickly, "for thinking my father was to blame for Will's death, or the burning of Spike's house. How *could* you think anything so terrible?"

She acted much too relieved about it and I studied her thoughtfully. "You thought so," I said quietly.

After she gasped, she ran to her sorrel, leaving me standing there. I didn't attempt to catch up with her. My job was to let the folks in Bartlett Wells know that this bunch of outlaws could still be in the vicinity.

Riding back toward town, I thought hard about Emily. One reason she'd been so upset last night could have been because she was scared to death her father had been responsible. By this time she had to know that he considered him a law unto himself, and no ordinary restrictions applied to him. Emily could easily believe that the end justified the "means" where a Bartlett was concerned. She'd been brought up that way, I suppose.

Ruth's house was the first I stopped at and she came right out. Her eyes were sunken from lack of sleep and tears. Looking at her, I felt she was drained of emotion and too tired to care about anything. But I was wrong. When she looked up at me her chin stiffened and she managed a smile.

"I'm mighty sorry about all this," I told her.

"We'll make out, Chris. Nobody's going to drive Spike out, not even Amos Bartlett." Her mouth tightened.

This was the kind of girl Texas needed. Then I told her what I'd found in the cave and she promised to send her father's cowboys to warn the other settlers.

"SPIKE'S seeing Amos late this afternoon about a loan so he can rebuild." Her eyes begged me to say it would be all right. "He won't need much money to put up shacks until he can drive his cattle to market. That sale money will be enough to help him get started over again."

"Then all he needs is a small loan right away," I said. I hadn't heard any of this from Amos and I hoped Ruth was right.

"My father can't do it for us." She looked sad. "We don't have cash enough, father started this ranch on a shoestring, but, at least, he doesn't owe Amos."

"It'll turn out all right." I smiled and touched the brim of my hat, then I wheeled Satan and took off for town.

I thought a whole lot riding in and it was the bank where I stopped and tied my horse. Amos was behind a desk in back of the grilled windows, right near the safe that contained paper that could ruin a lot of ranchers and merchants.

Amos didn't exactly look happy about seeing me, but he motioned me inside. Without any fancy frills, I told him what I'd found in the cave and he acted like he'd expected something of the sort.

"You going to help Spike out with a small loan, Mr. Bartlett, until he can sell his cattle?" I asked bluntly.

"I'm going to help him by buying him out." His smile was smugly pleased.

I leaned on his desk and eyed him steadily. "You do that, *amigo*," I said softly, "and I'll blast you off any campaign platform you crawl up on." I walked to the front of the bank and unfastened my money belt.

For a minute, I held it in my hand and looked at it. Here was a small

ranch and a bunch of good cattle. Then I counted out a thousand dollars because, hell, I could wait a while longer.

The cashier watched me with interest, his small bird-like eyes following my every action. I walked over to him and told him to deposit the thousand in Spike's name and see that he knew about it the minute he came in the bank, before he talked to Mr. Bartlett. "And don't say who deposited it for him," I said and his eyes darted toward Amos and back to me again.

My hands dropped to my guns and the little man's face got gray. "You'll be in trouble if you don't follow orders. *Savvy?*"

Outside, I took in a deep breath of air. Amos wasn't going to drive Spike out, not if a thousand bucks could help it. The anger lay deep in me that such men should live. One good bullet from my gun would let a lot of people out of their misery.

After taking Satan to the livery, I walked up to the Oasis, thinking a whiskey might settle my temper. My money belt felt lighter, but so did my mind.

JUST AS I was leaving the bar, Drago came in and got a mite red when he saw me. "That was a bad thing you did," he told me belligerently. "It's a damn good thing you're my brother. I'd gun most men down for smashing my jaw."

"Cool down," I said and shoved the bottle down the bar to him. "Who's going to round up these outlaws with the sheriff away? I'm certain your boss won't get off the seat of his pants to help."

Drago glared at me. "I'm going after them. Not that it's any of your business."

"I dealt myself in the game, Drago," I said and finished my drink. "I ride with you." Then I got an idea that liked to double me up with laughter. When I could I said, "It would sure be funny if that gang cleaned out Amos' bank."

"Ah, that wouldn't hurt him none," Drago growled. "And suppose you shut your mouth here in Bartlett Wells. Get your saddle bags, Chris, and be on your way."

We took each other's measure and the barkeep moved down to the other end. "It's too late for me to ride on," I said.

"And you keep away from Emily," he snapped. "She's not your kind."

I put my hands flat on the bar to keep from balling them into fists. "Don't tell me what to do, Drago," I said softly. "I don't like it. As for Emily, I got no use for her and she's got none for me." My eyes held his. "And you're a coward, or you'd go in and win her, if you could." I put money on the bar and started out. At the door I turned. "When do we ride?" I said.

Drago looked at me as if I were a stranger he'd just met and didn't like or trust. "We ride," he told me harshly, "when my men get back and tell me what way the bandits went. Amos thinks they've hightailed it out of here."

"Without robbing his bank? Or getting some loot somewhere else for their trouble?" I hooted at him. "Amos is a fool."

Outside, I almost bumped square into Roxanne Defoe and I apologized all over myself. In the daylight she looked more worn than under kerosine lamplight at night, though the becoming rose dress brought color to her cheeks. Her smile was still as warm.

After hesitating she said, "Hello, Chris."

"Howdy, Ma'am." I touched my hat brim. She started past, but I took her bundles and fell into step beside her.

A couple of townspeople nodded coolly at her and she held her head as high as Emily did. Anybody would

have to have plenty of respect for this little lady. No one had to tell me that Amos would feel it was beneath him if he married Roxanne, just as he'd feel that Emily would be down-graded if she married a mere foreman.

We stopped at the door of a small cottage on the outskirts of town that had a big sign that said MILLINERY. I opened the door for her and stepped in behind her.

After she took off her bonnet, she waited a minute before she said, "Would you like some coffee, Chris?"

"I'd surely love it, Ma'am. Thank you."

The room was busy looking, with a long table piled with a disarray of bolts of ribbon and artificial flowers and untrimmed bonnets of all sizes and shapes. But I liked it, somehow it was homey.

ROXANNE came back from the kitchen with a tray of molasses cookies, and coffee that was strong and hot. As we talked about St. Louis, which she knew having studied dancing there, I felt she was uncertain about telling me what was really on her mind. I smiled encouragingly and thought I'd been right about her having been a dance hall girl.

She took a deep breath. "You're an outsider, Chris, what do people away from here think about the coming elections for our Legislature?"

"Not much, Ma'am. I didn't know hardly anything until Drago told me Mr. Bartlett wanted to be senator." I drank my coffee. "Most folks are thinking about the outlaws who're running wild through Texas."

Her eyes filled with tears. "Amos is so set on winning, I don't know what it'll do to him to lose."

"Lose?" I laughed. "Why he can't, not when men owe his bank money."

After a while she smiled sadly. "He'll lose." Her eyes held mine steadily. "I want Amos to. It will do him and Emily good." She spoke like a loving wife and mother, who might have to scold her family for its own good. I mentally saluted her. She put her cup down carefully. "I've talked too much, Chris," she murmured. "But I've seen many men in my life and I know when I can trust one."

"Thank you, Ma'am," I said quietly.

She picked up a festive bonnet and put it down again. "That's for Ruth's honeymoon," she told me sadly. "I'm afraid it'll have to wait now."

I was thinking how good Roxanne was and how much the Bar B needed her steadying hand as I said good-bye and went up the street.

New signs, some youngsters were hammering up on buildings and the wooden awning posts, caught my eye. POLITICAL RALLY, they said. Then came Amos Bartlett's name, in big letters, as speaker. It was for 6:30 tomorrow night in the Oasis.

Tomorrow was Thursday and I'd sure be there. Unless there was some word of the marauders, I suspected everybody in and around the Wells would be there too. I hoped the discouraged ranchers wouldn't be cowards, that when the time came they'd stand up like men for what they knew was right. Texas had no place for yellow bellies.

Amos hadn't wasted any time. His decision must have been sudden and I wondered what had precipitated it. Then I recalled that he'd said how he could use the subject of outlaws in his campaign, and he wasn't wasting time. Folks were stirred up about Will's killing and the burning of Spike's house, so Amos was striking now. I gave him credit for his shrewdness.

I leaned up against a post and built a cigarette. Some men looked at the signs, muttered and went away. Then I saw Spike ride up to the bank and I crossed over to the Oasis to be off the street in case that weasel at the bank spilled my name to Spike.

- 6 -

DRAGO HAD left me a note. His men had reported no outlaws were around, so like Amos said, they'd left this district. I still thought such reasoning was plum foolish. My brother added that he wished me luck, if he didn't see me again, and maybe our paths would cross again some time.

If I'd planned to ride out right now, this note would have changed my plans. It seemed somehow important to me to have my opinion of my brother justified to my own satisfaction. He was a waiting man, I'd thought earlier, who'd eventually tell Emily off, but even as I thought about it I knew I was wrong. Drago wouldn't. He had a yellow streak in him, and though he might love her, his position with Amos overshadowed even that. He'd never jeopardize it.

Spike came in through the batwing doors and over to stand behind me as I crumpled up the note. "Ruth and I are going to get married right off," he said and the happiness spilled out of him. "We'll have to stay with her Pa until I can build." He slapped me on the back. "You know who put a thousand bucks to my account in the bank? Amos. So help me, Amos! And he didn't even try to buy me out. You suppose he's getting decent?"

Anger churned through me. That son! I twirled the glass around and didn't look at Spike. "He tell you he fattened the account?" I asked casually.

"Not in so many words." Spike chuckled. "I threatened to kill him if he didn't lend me enough to start over, and Amos said to go look, it was there for me, and to get out of the bank. Sure enough, the cashier said he had a thousand for me."

I grinned because I felt good. Now Spike and Ruth could be married and they'd be all right. Sometime when he was on his feet, he could pay me back. "Going to vote for Amos?" I asked.

"No!" he thundered.

Then I told him about the Bar B riders' report to Drago and that I didn't believe it.

Spike shoved back his hat. "That cave isn't the only place around here where they could hide out. There's an old abandoned adobe ranch house two or three miles beyond the butte." He fired a cigarette. "I had a hunch they might hole up there. Since Ruth told me what you'd found in the cave that made you think they'd been there, I don't think Amos and some of his riders killed Will and burned me out." His eyes brightened. "If you haven't anything to do, want to take a *pasear* out there? I'll tell you what, you come with me now to Ruth's for supper. We'll take supplies because she has it kind of rough and I don't want to impose on her larder." He smiled. "After dark we can go investigate."

"Suits me," I told him. I was getting tired of inactivity.

I insisted on adding some delicacies to the order at the store, then we tied the packages on back of our saddles and set off. Spike was a fine man and I wished I'd gotten along half as well with my brother. Then I got an idea. Spike would never make it real good here, even if he rebuilt, because a small rancher couldn't buck the powerful Bar B. If Spike threw in with me, maybe we could both make a lot of money. It was an idea I'd let roll around in my mind for a little.

RUTH RAN out to meet us and she welcomed me so warmly I felt wonderful. When Spike told her about the thousand, she could hardly believe it. That made me feel good too. But I would have been less than human if I didn't envy Spike, and she blushed real pretty when I told her so.

It was homelike in the big kitchen and she acted all excited at the things I'd brought. Then I blinked hard. Standing in the doorway to the main room was Emily!

A different Emily from the one I'd seen before. She wore a ruffled apron over a simple blue cambric and her tawny hair hung loose in waves to her shoulders. She looked a lot younger and more vulnerable. Her eyes glowed when they met mine and clung for a second.

I didn't know you'd be here," she said and turned to help Ruth with supper.

It was as if I was rooted to the spot and couldn't move. Maybe it was the way she looked tonight that brought me face to face with the truth.

I was in love with Emily Bartlett!

It was as if I'd been poleaxed. A man like me couldn't love a princess. When I'd rode to the Bar B I hadn't thought love would flame for me across her range. That was the reason I'd wanted her to change and be a warmer, more human girl, even though I hadn't thought she ever would. Now, I knew no matter what, I loved her with all my being. I didn't want to marry her because of who she was. I knew we could never be happy under the shadow of the Bar B and her father. And, no matter if she loved a man, she'd never go with him and leave the kingdom.

Ruth threw her arms around Emily. "Your father lent Spike a thousand dollars! Isn't it glorious?"

Emily managed to smile, but I could see she doubted if Amos Bartlett would. She flicked her eyes to me and they narrowed just a little, but she made no comment.

I didn't join in the talk about the upcoming wedding. All I could do was wish it were mine, that the girl I'd found could be one who'd be by my side to build a little place all our own. I wished she could love me as I loved her, without any of the arrogance and superiority. Those things I couldn't live with. Looking at Emily, my heart felt sore and empty.

After we helped with the dishes, I was anxious to ride, to get away from Emily. Tonight she seemed to have forgotten she was a cattle king's daughter, and seemed natural and unspoiled.

Then Emily said, "Ruth, let's ride with them and scout the house too."

I protested, but Ruth agreed and, sensibly enough, pointed out that the two of us wouldn't get into a gun fight with a big band of outlaws, and nobody would start one if the girls were with us.

"We'll just be two girls riding in the moonlight with our men." Ruth glanced at Spike and giggled.

There wasn't much I could do about it when I saw that Spike agreed with the girls. I guess he just wanted Ruth near him tonight.

WE RODE across the moonbright land. Ruth and her man were off to our right and Emily and I were alone. "It's beautiful, isn't it," she said, "with the stars so close."

"You wouldn't be happy anywhere else, would you?"

She turned to look at me. "I would be happy anyplace if the man I loved lived there."

"It would take a terrible lot of cattle for a man to afford you, Ma'am," I laughed as best I could.

"You're wrong, Chris," she said angrily. "And it shows how little you know about me. I'd scrub floors and brand calves for the man I loved," she said it vehemently and pushed her horse into a faster lope.

About the only thing she left with me was confusion. Maybe I didn't know Emily, but she'd shown me a whole lot of arrogant, bad tempered girl. I put my hand to my cheek and felt the sting of the whip. Emily was like a firecracker all right, and I smiled and spurred Satan after her.

Ahead, we could see the outline of

the trees shadowing the adobe house and Ruth and Spike joined us. The house was dark, but from around the back I heard the soft nicker of a horse and the clink of a bridle. Fear froze through me. Night riders! And we had two girls here with us.

"Sing," I ordered sharply, and broke loudly into "Oh, Susannah." They joined in. We had to do something to show we weren't a sheriff's party.

"Hey, Chris!" Drago called and he and his men rode out from behind the house. He stiffened when he saw Emily and turned on me. "You blasted stupid fool," he bellowed. "What do you mean bringing Emily here? We could have been outlaws."

There wasn't much I could say, because my brother spoke the truth. But Spike told him, "But you weren't, Drago. No harm's done. And Chris and I could have handled it."

"Keep out of this," Drago bit the words and stepped out of his saddle. He handed the reins to one of his men and came to stand by Satan. "You've done nothing but stir things up, Chris. You've insulted my boss and risked his daughter's life. Get down off that horse and I'll teach you to mix in my business. I ought to shoot you down for the troublemaker you are." There was fury mixed with the bitterness in him.

"You're a fool," I said mildly. Spike and the girls were quiet, realizing this was strictly between Drago and me. It was the last way I wanted it to end between us, but I got off my horse and unfastened my gun belt. I dropped it beside Drago's.

He rushed me, shoving me off balance. He threw a vicious right that connected and dropped me to my knees. While I was groggy and struggling to get to my feet, Drago tried to kick in my ribs, but I rolled out of the way and got up. There was a red haze before my eyes and I forgot that he was anything but a dirty fighter intent on killing me. I hit him in the belly and doubled him up, then I brought up a hard uppercut that smashed his nose. I think I heard Emily call out something, but I couldn't be sure. This time when Drago rushed me I was ready and I hit him with everything I had.

I stood there, breathing hard, and watched him stagger and fall on his face.

Emily came running to us. I stepped back so she could get to Drago and I guess I knew then if she loved a man his lack of wealth wouldn't be a barrier between them.

But Emily came to *me!*

She clutched my arms. "Are you hurt?" she asked and I saw tears glistening in her eyes, as she dabbed her handkerchief on the cut on my forehead. "Oh, Chris," she whispered. "Chris." And I held her close for a moment before I let her go.

"I'm fine," I said. "Let's ride." We left Drago there for his riders to take home.

We were all pretty sober going back to Ruth's house. They knew I felt badly about the fight with my brother, because they knew this was the end of things between us. Though they insisted, I didn't go inside where Emily was spending the night. There wasn't any use telling her that I'd be riding south the dawn after the rally.

I looked down at her and took away the picture of Emily standing in the doorway, the light shining on her hair,

her lips slightly parted and her eyes luminous.

At the livery where I left Satan, I still didn't know why I didn't get my saddle bags and ride on. It could only be harder than it already was for me to see Emily again.

A LITTLE after six the next day, I cut across to the Oasis and Amos Bartlett's speech. The place was already packed, with more people coming up the walk. Rigs and horses lined all the hitchrails on Main Street.

They'd made a raised platform at one end of the saloon and it was draped with bunting. There was the Texas flag along side the American.

Amos, dressed in black broadcloth, beamed down at the folks. He was sure a confident *hombre*. As I leaned up against the wall by the door, I noticed Emily sitting in the back with Ruth and I waved at them.

After about half a dozen speeches introducing Amos to everybody who knew him anyhow, he started in on us.

"Friends and fellow Texans," he bellowed. "I know you're like me in being true Texans, to the point where you all think and breathe what's best for Texas. *I* know that *you* know what *we* all know, that is, that we got to rid our great state of thieves and outlaws that are blighting our fair land like the locusts and pestilence of old. I'm not asking, I'm demanding that you help me in keeping Texas great by sending me to the Legislature. There I shall see to it that the State Rangers are enlarged."

His voice boomed on, but I'd stopped listening to him. I'd had a sudden notion that if I were an outlaw there'd be no better time than this to rob the Bartlett bank. As I started to slip out, the boos and catcalls began. Man, how they hooted at Amos Bartlett!

"Throw him out," a voice shouted.

"Down with the dirty crook," another called and almost everybody in the Oasis took it up.

I got out the front door and, keeping in the shadows, started down the street. Then I heard my name called softly and turned around. It was Emily running after me.

"I saw you," she said breathlessly. "I was afraid you'd be leaving town without saying good-bye, Chris."

My throat got tight and funny. "No, darling," I said huskily before I thought. "I'm robber hunting."

"I'm going with you," she informed me. "It's my father's bank." There was a little of her arrogance and I smiled. Somehow, I didn't mind just a little of it, like this.

There was action at the bank, all right. Seven men spilled out the doors and I began shooting. They ran for their horses, but I spilled two of them out of their saddles. The rest were galloping down the street, their guns blazing.

One man was dead, the other wasn't far from it. "Talk," I told him. "Did your gang kill Will Grant and fire the Loomis place?"

Slowly he nodded his head. "Yes," he whispered. "He knew us. He'd tell Loomis." And the outlaw wouldn't be talking any more.

INSIDE the bank, they'd forced open the safe in Amos' office and papers were thrown all over the floor. "My father was afraid of something like this and took most of the money out to the ranch," Emily said.

She began picking up papers and the next thing I knew, she was tearing them up into tiny pieces. I took one out of her hands and it was a mortgage of somebody named Yates. Emily grabbed it and tore it up too. I didn't help, this was her own.

"Why?" I asked quietly.

"Because I've learned a lot." Her eyes held mine. "Time has passed for the great cattle barons. We've got to work together as a community. My father has to learn that, just as I did."

"I see," I said. Apparently Amos

was talking so loud up at the Oasis nobody noticed the racket here. Emily tore up the last mortgage and I smiled. "Finished?"

Her eyes glowed as she took my hand. "You told me a lot about myself I never knew before. Take me with you, Chris. I love you and I'll try so very hard."

I pulled her to me and she clung, then put her tawny head against my chest. "I reckon I couldn't go without you, darling. Do you think Spike and Ruth would like to go with us? We could have our own houses, but we could work a ranch together."

"I'm sure of it." Her smile was beautiful. "Spike said last night he wished you'd ask him. Ruth suspects that money came from you, she knows my father." She shut her eyes. "My father won't win. I think he'll know he must withdraw his name and let the men choose their own man. I think he'll be a lot finer when he learns he can't buy people, or frighten them." She smiled into my eyes then. "Besides Roxanne will help. He'll marry her now and know some happiness again. I've begged him to, but he was too proud to marry a milliner."

Emily lifted her lips to mine. It was a long kiss filled with gentleness and passion. I knew a great job and thankfulness that love had flamed across the Bar B for Emily Bartlett, too.

We Took A Tip From You!

So many of you wrote in, urging us to put TODAY'S LOVE STORIES into the smart, new digest-size format, that we decided to heed your wishes without deay

But that was only the beginning!

We're using a thinner, better grade of paper, which gives sharper, cleaner reproduction to type and illustration. You'll find that this magazine is not only handier but easier to read.

And there's more to read!

We've added 32 MORE PAGES to the magazine, which means more words per issue, more first-class tales of today's love and romance than before. We haven't taken anything away to give you a fancier-looking magazine — we've added!

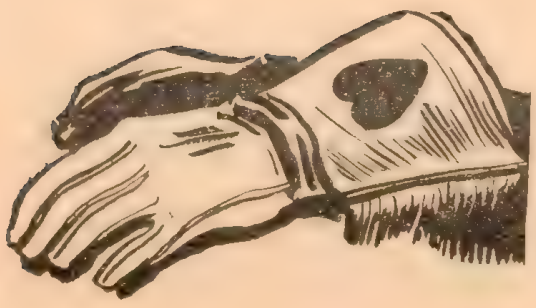
June Issue Now on Sale! on all stands

Look for

TODAY'S LOVE STORIES

I had more to worry about than this man who belittled girl sheriffs...

They Called Me Sheriff Annie



"GEE ANNIE," Bobbie called, "I guess you're the best shot in Oklahoma Territory. Do it some more." He ran farther across the backyard this time and threw the tin can higher in the air. I blazed away, making it dance before it hit the ground, while the youngster whooped.

He retrieved it and tossed it again, like I was paying him to do so I could practice my draw. Before my gun cleared leather, there was a succession of shots from behind me so rapid they

blurred into each other and the can danced wildly.

I whirled. Tom Briggs had come around to the back of the office building, but it wasn't the fun loving cowhand's gun that smoked. It belonged to a stranger, a tall, prairie-browned man wearing a plaid open-collared shirt, and black pants tucked into handsomely decorated boots. His guns were tied down like gunmen fasten them. His dark eyes, regardless of the amusement they held now, could, I sensed, become deadly cold. He certainly wasn't like the average ranny that drifted through town.

"You could be a right smart shot with a few years' practice. For a little bitty girl that is," he added mockingly as he holstered his gun. Then he turned to Tom. "Don't tell me *she's* the sheriff! What's the matter? Aren't there any men in Salt Forks?"

"That's enough," I snapped. "Did you want to see me about something?"

Tom's eyes twinkled. "I got to go," he said, "but Jim here has something to tell you, Sheriff Annie." He scurried off.

"Suppose you come into my office," I said coldly. I didn't like this man. I didn't trust his looks. His spurs jingled as he followed me inside the small building, with its good sized cell at the rear of the room. I pushed a hairpin more firmly into my dark braids,

and sat down at Pa's desk. Somehow, just being there gave me the extra feeling of confidence I needed, because it appeared that this might become my first official duty since Pa swore me in last year.

"Salt Forks is pretty well off the trail and stage route," I said. "What brings you here and who are you anyway?"

"Jim Pritchard, Ma'am, and I'm just riding through." I studied him as he rolled a cigarette and lit it. "I think you should know," he said, "that there's a dead body about five miles out by the clear water. You know where I mean? At the base of that volcanic rock."

"There's what!" I sat straighter. hardly believing my ears. "Is it one of the wagoners?" I breathed easier when he assured me it wasn't, that he'd stopped by the salt lagoons to make sure.

THAT MOCKING light came back into his dark eyes. "I'll be right glad to ride back with you, in case you need a reliable gun."

"Why, you, you," I sputtered, then managed to steady down. "What would I need even my own guns for? A man

doesn't kill and stay around to gloat, does he?"

"Maybe not, but there's a rumor that the Dandy Kid has trailed back this way, and he could be holed up in the rocks waiting to plug anyone who comes along."

The Dandy Kid! The man I'd vowed to kill. Hot blood zinged through me, and the anger that had never died flamed brightly. I'd been waiting to meet him for a year now and I never dared to hope he'd come back this way. It seemed too foolhardy on his part. "Let him try to gun me down," I said grimly. "Just let him try!"

"Well," Jim said, "since you won't let me see how you handle dead bodies and outlaws, I'll be going back to my drink. Do you mind if I sort of stick around Salt Forks? I'm mighty curious to watch a girl sheriff operate. Let's say, if she's as pretty as you are."

I flushed. "I can't help it if you choose to," I said as haughtily as anyone my height can. "But I'll have to ask you for your guns. This is a family town. Half the men don't own firearms, and the other half doesn't even know how to load them. I wouldn't want you getting any fancy notions about using your six shooters, just for the fun of it."

I had the satisfaction of making him yelp in protest, but I was firm. "I don't know you, Jim. Either you hang them up, or be out of town before I get back. I aim to keep it peaceful here, whether you think I'm capable of doing it or not."

Jim shook his head. "I'm real sorry I can't oblige," he said coldly. "But I don't hand over my guns for any sheriff in this or any other Territory." He turned and walked stiffly out of the front door. I watched him go across to the saloon and, for a second, I sort of wished he'd handed over that belt, even though he sure riled me like no other man had... I hated his leaving so soon!

I checked my cartridges and went out into the hot afternoon sunshine. The drowsy street was still, only a few horses were tied up at the rails. There's not much going on at any time in Salt Forks. There're only a few stores and a handful of houses, including my small one, clustered off from the dusty main street. Of course, there are outlying ranches and the cowhands bring money in on Saturday nights. Like I told Jim, this is a family town, its main business is salt. We ship it all over the county in huge wagon loads from the lagoons five miles away.

I did wonder if Jim were having his last drink with Tom, but I had more to think about than a stranger who belittled girl sheriffs!

AT THE LIVERY, I saddled my horse and selected another one on which to transport the dead body, then I rode out of town and veered across the prairie. Through the sun-haze I could see the distant jagged rise of volcanic rock a mile or so beyond the lagoons.

The Dandy Kid might be up there somewhere, and hope was in me that he'd show himself. I wanted him in my sights. Oh, how I wanted him there! It was the Dandy Kid who'd ridden into Salt Forks last year after a prison break, and who'd shot my father down in cold blood when Pa recognized his face from the Wanted dodger. Pa had sworn me in before he died, because I was the only one in town who could really use a gun.

We'd lost the Kid's trail by the time I organized an inexperienced posse. But now his new trail would cross mine, if rumor were right.

I tried to figure who might be dead. Unless, of course, the Kid truly had returned and brought his outlaw band along to some hideout, and it was one of them who'd caught his bullet. No townsman was missing, or I'd have heard.

I rode hard. The prairie gave way to

desolation of thorn bush and mesquite, the closer I approached the lagoons. I could see the picketed mules and the large wagons by the shimmering crystalized shore. Men in brine-crusted clothes were shovelling the crude salt, but since none of them had been hurt I bypassed them, waving as I rode on under the scorching sun. I studied the rise, hoping for a glint of a rifle, but there was none.

I thought about this new murder, if it was one. My job would be to find and bring in the killer. The responsibility lay heavy, and I hoped Pa up there somewhere would guide me. I must not fail! All of Salt Forks would look to me to see that justice was done.

Bushes hid a clear view of the water, and I dismounted the better to search. But look though I did, I couldn't find any dead man. Then, in the deep shadow cast by overhanging rock, I saw a darker shape on the ground and ran over to it.

I stood there staring, my mind racing and anger riding me hard. There at my feet lay a body all right. The body of a dead mule!

"The low-down, good-for-nothing onery skunk," I yelled. I'd fix him plenty, and Tom too. The cowboy was always playing jokes and I kicked myself that I'd fallen into a trap. But I blamed Jim most. Tom alone, wouldn't have dared pull that trick on me.

I just hoped for Jim's sake he'd be out of town when I got back, but I doubted he would be. He and Tom would be laughing all over town about how I'd hightailed it out to the flats.

I was furious, too, that Jim would dare tell me a make-up rumor about the Kid when Tom must have told him he'd killed Pa. That wasn't funny at all.

I was still mad as hops when I tied up at the rail in front of the saloon and pushed through the batwing doors.

Tom was at the bar and saw me first. He took one look at my face and left fast for the kitchen.

Jim turned around, so did the cowhands standing there. From their expressions, they'd been just waiting for me to burst in.

"Well, well, if it isn't Sheriff Annie." Jim's eyes crinkled with suppressed laughter.

"Hand over your guns," I snapped. "Or I'll arrest you for disturbing the peace." This was one way I knew that would guarantee he'd leave town.

"What peace?" he asked.

"Mine!" I said.

EVERYBODY roared and color flamed my face. "Hand them over." I drew my guns. "I mean it. You're a double-barreled skunk and I won't hesitate to use these if I need to. And I don't miss, mister."

There was dead silence in the saloon, and Jim looked at me like I'd lost my mind.

Tom called from the kitchen door. "Honest, Sheriff Annie, it was all my fault. I didn't know you'd get so mad-like. We was only teasing."

The men at the bar moved uncomfortably and I motioned with my guns. "Unbuckle, mister."

After a moment, Jim did as I told him, though he was angry clear through. I took his belt. "Another thing," I said. "You picked a poor subject to tease me about, that's the Dandy Kid. I don't forgive you for that."

I walked out and across to the office, where I tossed his belt on a peg behind the door and dropped his guns into a desk drawer. Jim wouldn't linger long in town without them, and I'd be goshamighty glad when he picked them up and rode out. I hated the man and never wanted to see him again.

Then like I always do every day, I studied the accumulated dodgers so I'd be certain if any wanted man came into town. A worse bunch of gunslicks I've never seen. Actually, I was hunting for Jim's face, and hoped I'd find it there. I didn't.

After a bit, I put them aside and got out my embroidery, to keep my fingers

busy and to pass the time. I can't always target practice.

The door burst open and Jim strode into the room, then he burst out laughing and threatened to rock the walls. "Oh, no," he groaned when he could manage to talk. "I've never seen anything so silly in my life. I reckon it's your short riding skirt, and boots, and guns and your hat cocked back on your head. A little bitty sheriff—embroidering."

"Get out" I yelled and dropped the antimacassar into a drawer.

He pulled up a chair and sat down, tilting his own hat back with a forefinger, then he rolled a cigarette. "Let's get something straight," he said. "I don't hit below the belt. Rumor does have it that the Kid and his men took off this way."

Relief flooded through me but, I eyed him suspiciously. "You look like a gunslick yourself. How do I know you're not here to draw off the marshal and his men and *me*, while the Kid strikes someplace else?"

"You don't," he said and got up. "Now may I have my guns? If the Kid's in the neighborhood I'm going to need them, and you're going to need help."

"I'm nothing of the sort," I told him. "I can handle anything that comes my way. Besides, I don't know a thing about you. Just where do you come from anyway?"

"South," he said. "Now can I have my irons?"

"No," I said again and, "get out, I'm busy." I reached for some papers.

HE CAME around to my side of the desk and jerked me out of the chair. "All right, I'll take this then." He drew me up close to him and, bending down, he kissed me full on the mouth. I stood there stiff and unyielding and let him do it, because I knew if I fought against it he'd never let me go. But gradually, I didn't want him to stop and I was kissing him back. I trembled like an aspen leaf under his caressing hand. My breath came faster and I clung to him, pressing even closer against him, my hands clasped around his neck.

When Jim let me go I couldn't meet his eyes. "Get out," I ordered for the second time, then I ran out of the back door and into the yard. I was terribly upset because, admittedly, his kisses had stirred something in me I never knew existed.

Other men have kissed me, but they've not been shattering like Jim's. They'd left no impression on me one way or the other. And I hated myself for having cooperated so thoroughly, for wanting more of those kisses from a man I hated. I couldn't understand myself.

When I finally went back inside, Jim's guns were gone from the drawer and his belt from the peg.

I guess I knew all along, I wouldn't be able to hold them long, and I was glad he'd taken them and gone. At least, now I'd have some peace of mind.

Bobbie came in just then to toss cans for my target practice, but I paid him off. I wasn't in the mood. First, though, he did an errand. Down at the livery he learned that Jim had just taken his horse. He'd finally done what I'd told him to. Jim had ridden on his way.

Was it, I wondered, to rendezvous with the Dandy Kid? There had to be something shadowy about his past, else he'd have explained more definitely where he came from and why. But if this were where he was going, why had he warned me about the Kid in the first place? Unless, like I'd suspicioned, it was to draw the law away from where the outlaw had actually gone.

Curiosity, I guess it was, sent me to the telegraph office and I wired Pa's friend and mine, Marshal Glidden at the Junction, twenty-five miles north. The answer reached me at home while I was picking at my supper in the kitchen.

No one of Jim's description was on his wanted list. The Marshal verified the rumor about the Kid, warning me not to tackle him myself, but to wire him instantly if the outlaw showed up.

All I prayed was that the killer would! But, somehow, with Jim out of town, trust or no trust, I felt terribly alone. Kissing a man like him is no good. It makes a girl soft-like and there wasn't any room in my life for that. Remembrance of how the Kid had unmercifully gunned Pa down, made me square my shoulders.

AFTER I washed the dishes, I left the little house where Pa and I'd been so happy, and went around to see all the neighbors to explain about the Kid. I urged the wagoners to take rifles with them, or better still, stay away from the lagoon until the Dandy Kid's whereabouts was certain. I managed to calm their wives' fears, assuring them the Marshal would be along anytime it was really necessary. That the rumor still could be untrue.

Tomorrow I'd ride out and warn the ranchers to put a tighter watch on their herds and, more particularly, on their horses. The killer might be needing fresh ones.

Thought of the outlaw drove me hard and, instead of returning home and to bed, I knew I'd have to ride out to the rise of rock. It could be that the band, if it were there, would get careless and I'd be able to spot a camp fire somewhere.

I knew this was too big a job for one girl, even a good shot like I am. I'd certainly need the Marshal, but it would be a great help if I could someway locate the hide out. I determined to go hunting for it.

The prairie was moonwashed and peaceful. Yet a threat hung over it. Night birds chirped and far off a dog barked, but soon guns would blaze if I had my way.

I reached the lagoons, scanning the rocks ahead for a sign, but I was still too far away. The irregular coned top was dark and menacing even in the moonlight.

Then I saw a horse and rider pounding hard down the road from the clear water. I spurred across to the wagons, hoping I hadn't been silhouetted against the sky as he was, and that he hadn't seen me. But it was a doubtful hope. I slid out of my saddle and drew my horse into the shadows. There I unholstered my guns and waited.

The man came at a gallop, then changed his course and headed directly for where I was hidden. He didn't ride past me. It was Jim.

"Hey, Annie," he called. "Don't shoot, it's me."

Disgust and shame filled me that I'd let him hold me close, that I'd kissed him. Even though Marshal Glidden didn't have him on any list, I knew him now for what I'd suspicioned—a gunslick.

"Where have you been?" I demanded.

"Looking for the Kid," he told me. "Same as you."

"You're trying to rendezvous with the Kid. I'm trying to kill him," I blazed. "There's a difference." He didn't interrupt. "My guess," I went on, "is that you've gotten mixed up in your orders someway. You haven't got your directions to his hideout straight."

"That's the way you figure it?" he asked.

"Can you think of a better explanation for your actions?" I took a step forward. "All right," I snapped. "You're under arrest."

EVEN IN the moonlight I saw his eyes crinkle with amusement. "What's it for this time, little Sheriff Annie?" he asked and his tone turned my heart over.

"On suspicion," I said. "Cohorting with the Dandy Kid. And I'll kill you, Jim, if you make a move for your guns. Remember a girl can kill a man

dead same as a man can. Now unbuckle that belt and let it drop slow and easy."

"You wouldn't kill me, Annie, not after the way you kissed me this afternoon." He sort of drawled it. "You know what? I'd like to kiss you again."

I closed my eyes for a fraction of a second. It was enough though. He moved like a cat and clipped me on the jaw. He caught me as I fell.

When I came to, I was tied to my horse. Trotting along, he'd almost reached Salt Forks and his stable stall. It was useless for me to look for Jim. I wouldn't know where to begin, and I cussed long and hard for being weak. Like I said, it makes a girl softlike to be kissed the way Jim kissed me. Only because of that, he'd won back there at the lagoon. He'd be laughing at me now.

A fine sheriff I was! I was a wee bit grateful to Jim for tying me in such a way that I could untie myself! And tomorrow was another day. I'd go search for that hideout and there'd be no nonsense the next time I met up with Jim.

I didn't have the opportunity to look though, because first I had to notify the ranchers about the Dandy Kid. That took all day, considering the way they were scattered around.

It was late when I returned to town and I stopped off at the office to see if anyone had left word for me about anything. I'd barely lit the kerosene lamp when I heard horses gallop up the street, and gun shots followed by loud whoops.

I ran to the door in time to see seven riders, wearing guns, tie up at the hitch rail. They stepped out of their saddles, still whooping it up, and swaggered into the saloon. Even from where I stood, I could hear them yell for whiskey.

Was it the Dandy Kid and his band? My heart beat faster as hate drilled through me. This could be it! I'd gun down the Kid as he'd gunned Pa, or be killed in the trying. Then I remembered Marshal Glidden's instructions, and I had brains enough to admit I wouldn't be able to kill them all single handed. I'd send for him, but first I must be sure this was the outlaw outfit.

I crossed the street and followed the men, my hands hovering over my guns, then I stopped dead inside the batwing doors. Jim stood at the end of the bar, and it was evident the roisterers knew him, even though he hadn't ridden in with them.

Something inside me died. His half-smile didn't infuriate me. It just didn't do anything.

"All right, boys," I called loudly enough to be heard over the din. "It's all right if you want to have a drink to celebrate whatever you're celebrating, but when you're finished ride on out and stay out. We don't want your kind lingering here in Salt Forks."

The men wheeled around when I started to speak, and from my study of the dodgers, I knew the Kid wasn't among them, though most of them were wanted by the law. They were startled at first, then they rocked with laughter, pounding each other on the back. All but Jim. He just watched me.

A BURLY, bearded fellow's face broke into a grin. "Well, now," he said. "What do you know?" He walked over and flicked my badge with his finger. "A girl sheriff. And ain't she cute, boys?"

"Take your hands off me," I ordered.

His companions turned back to their whiskey as though they owned the place and had no intention of leaving. The big man tossed down the drink he was holding, dropped the glass onto the floor. He wiped his beard with the back of his hand. "And if we like it here, honey?" he said. "What will a pretty girl like you do about it."

Suddenly his bear like arms jerked me to him, and his beard scratched my

face as he tried to kiss me. "Let me go," I yelled. I fought to reach my guns, but he slid his arms down pinioning mine. I could only kick and turn my face this way and that to avoid his slobering mouth, while rage tightened me.

To my unearthly surprise, it was Jim who came to my rescue. He pulled the man away. "Lay off," he ordered goodnaturedly. "The lady doesn't want to be kissed, didn't you hear."

Without a by-your-leave, Jim swung me up into his arms, like I was a sack. I wildly protested, while the men gaffawed. Jim carried me out of the saloon, across the street and into my office. He jerked open the cell door, dumped me down onto the bunk and grabbed my guns, even before I could draw one of them. Then he turned the lock on me.

"Now stay put," he said. "There's not a thing a little bitty girl can do."

"It's the Kid's band." I rattled the bars. "And you're the king pin of it. Get out of my sight. I hate you." This last I yelled at nothing because Jim had slammed the front door, likely locking that too.

I sat down on the bunk trying to figure out what to do next. I thought I understood now. The riders hadn't appeared to be thinking of riding on. Instead of joining the Kid someplace else, it could be that, because we're a peaceful town, off trails and stage routes, the Kid had decided to hole up here with his band. It wouldn't be the first time a peaceful town had been treed. I determined if it were, it would be over my dead body.

But first, I had to get out and send for Marshal Glidden. And I d i d n ' t know how.

It wasn't likely to occur to any of my neighbors that I was locked in my own jail, even if the kerosene lamps weren't lit out at my house. I often rode across the prairie stopping the night with ranch friends. Bobbie wouldn't be around until late morning to toss cans. For all anyone knew I could starve to death in my cell, while the town was being taken over by an outlaw mob. No townsman would be able to cope with that situation. Once that happened, there'd be the devil's own ruckus reclaiming it for decent people. It had to be stopped before it started. Yet, here I was behind bars!

I moodily watched the front door, hoping somebody would walk in, but nobody did. Late that night I heard horses ride off and I managed to doze. I suppose the worry had exhausted me. At least, I thought, there'd been no shooting up the town so far. For that I was thankful.

THE SUN was up when the front door opened and woke me. Tom called, "You there, Miss Annie?"

I sprang up. "Let me out of here," I cried. "And hurry."

"Just take it easy." He set a tray on the desk. He dropped the big key ring, finally retrieved it, and managed to find the keyhole.

"What happened last night?" I demanded.

"I don't rightly know," he said and scratched his head. "The men left like you told them to and Jim went along. I found a note just now under my hotel room door. Said you was locked in the jail house, and to get you some coffee."

I didn't even hear him. So Jim had gone with his pals, just like I'd been sure he would.

Now, I had to pick up their trail, but first I had to wire the Marshal. He'd come as soon as possible with a posse, but I might save him valuable time if I could spot the Kid's hideaway. I'd stand watch to see if he moved on and I'd trail him if he decided to, marking well my route for the lawman.

Next, I sent Tom through town to tell people to stay off the streets and for the shopkeepers to not unboard their stores, just in case the outlaws came back. Then I headed for the lagoons.

I tried not to think about Jim because of the hate boiling in me. Hate was no good for steady nerves that I needed now for the job ahead. I sighed though. Why did he have to be so attractive? And why did his kisses send such thrills through me when he was a no-good? I deeply regretted that I'd ever met him. It seemed a little unreal that soon he'd be dead. I ached inside about that, but I finally closed my mind to it.

There were a few less workers than usual at the salt shore, their rifles close. When they saw me they dropped their shovels and hurried to meet me, fear and worry etching their faces. They'd heard about our visitors last night. So far, they hadn't seen any riders, but they were glad when I insisted that they forget loading salt and head on back to town. I appreciated it when they told me I was a fine sheriff and I only wished I could echo their words. I don't know what they'd have said if I'd told them I'd been thoroughly kissed, and had kissed back one of the outlaws. They'd have precious little respect, I'm afraid. I didn't have any myself.

Today I rode with even more serious intent than I had before. I studied the rise ahead, wondering if lookouts would spot me. It gave me a squirmy feeling. Even though I was out of range, I might be riding closer with every hoofbeat.

HORSES had been at the clear water. That was certain, as I examined the ground. Elation was in me as I finally picked up the rough trail they'd followed. A thought occurred to me. If I were caught sneaking along, and it was unlikely I wouldn't be, I could be held as hostage. The Kid would be glad to dicker with the Marshal when the lawman caught up with me. And I'd find some way, at that time, to use his guns.

My horse had the devil's own time picking his way around the large weather-smoothed boulder. I left shreds of my handkerchief on the scraggy bushes to guide me out, if I were lucky enough to get out. My eyes darted this way and that, and my guns were ready. I was cautious not to rattle too many stones, but it was hopeless to go anywhere without making a racket on this kind of trail.

An hour later, I wound around a boulder that towered over me and then dipped down to a small canyon. I pulled up and stared down at a group of mesquite-covered shelters. I'd found the hideout.

In the center of the clearing, the big burly bearded man Jim had called Red, was rubbing down his horse. I wondered where Jim was, then something made the big man look up. It was too late then to turn tail and run. Again, my weakness for the attractive man had betrayed me.

There was nothing else to do, so I held up my spare white handkerchief and waved it aloft, as I rode slowly down the incline.

Red ran to meet my horse. "Well, well," he smirked, "if it ain't the girl sheriff." His face hardened. "The Kid ain't going to like this."

He pulled me out of the saddle and grabbed my guns, then he led me across to one of the shelters. Two men came outside. I knew from the dodgers who the beady-eyed one was. The Dandy Kid. Pa's killer. The man beside him was Jim.

Other outlaws appeared and crowded close. Meeting the Kid's eyes, I knew he wouldn't give a darn about holding me hostage. He wasn't the kind of man to dicker and fear crawled into me, knotting my stomach.

I did the only thing I could think of. I broke away from Red's grip and ran to Jim. "Why did you leave me?" I cried loudly. I stood on tiptoes and put my arms around his neck and kissed him. Behind us the men laughed. Jim clutched me to him and kissed me back.

Then he buried his face in my hair. "Follow my lead," he whispered.

"Maybe I can get you out of here alive."

The kiss did it. My voice trembled with love, because all along it had been that. "Take me with you when you ride out," I begged. "I guess I'm just in love with an outlaw."

The Dandy Kid said softly, "Can't you keep your lady sheriffs where they belong, Jim?" Because he wasn't angry it made me fear him more.

I WHEELED. "You let us be," I scolded. "I want to talk to my man." I took Jim's arm, made a face at the outlaws and they parted to let us through. Before we were out of earshot, Red and two other men ran for horses, and I knew they'd been sent to scout my backtrail.

"This is what I've been afraid of," Jim groaned. "That you'd come. We can't start shooting because we haven't a chance to get out alive, so we'll wait until dark and bushwack the guards, if we can. It's our only chance."

"Our?" I asked. "You're not one of them?" His eyes were warm and my heart leaped. "The Marshal's on his way, I wired him this morning."

Up on the bluff a shot rang out, followed rapidly by others. "He's here now," Jim smiled.

The Kid was walking with catlike steps across the clearing, his face emotionless, but I felt the wings of death brush me. I pretended I didn't notice, and moved so that Jim turning with me had his side facing the outlaw.

The Kid's voice was a monotone. "So you took me in, Jim. You're no more a rustler than the girl is." His hand streaked for his gun, but I'd slipped one of Jim's out of its holster.

As the Kid's gun spoke so did mine. Only mine spoke a second ahead of his. When he fell I knew I'd paid back for Pa. I'd saved Jim's life, but I had no time to think about it.

Jim was firing now and so was I, making our shots count. The remaining outlaws scattered when the Marshal shouted from the bluff. The battle was over.

A long time later, Jim and I were alone in my office. It was the first chance we'd had to talk. After the Marshal had gotten my first wire, he'd decided he better give me some help in case I should need it. He and the posse had started out before I ever sent the second wire. Tom had told him where I was heading and they'd picked up the trail I'd left.

"I still don't see why you didn't tell me at once; why you didn't tell me you were after the Kid because he stole your favorite horse," I told Jim.

"When I found out about your Pa, I knew I had to get to him before you tangled with him. I was scared the damn Kid would kill you."

I shook my head. "But how did you ever angle into that gang?"

"They believed my story, that I was wanted for rustling. By joining up, I knew sometime I'd get my chance at the Dandy Kid."

He came around to my side of the desk and this time he didn't jerk me out of my chair. "Do you still want to be a little bitty sheriff?" he asked softly. "Or will you ride south with me to my spread?"

"I'm not a very good sheriff and the Marshal's going to send in a competent man. I like the south." I smiled up at him.

Then I went all soft-like again, the way this attractive man had always made me feel. I stood on tiptoe again for his kiss, and I said goodbye to Sheriff Annie as his lips crushed down on mine.

THE END

The Flame Maiden

by Peter Norcross

She was a vision, this mysterious flame maiden—that was apparent. But she seemed to be a vision of hell; and Lee Vane found himself caught in a sinister trap with Mady Niles...

SERGEANT LEE VANE suddenly awoke, aware that the dogs were stirring in their snow nests and rumbling low growls. Snug and warm in his sleeping-bag he lay for a few seconds motionless and alert. A breeze sighing through the trees bore upon its breath softly falling snow, the flakes hissing gently as they floated into the still-glowing embers of the fire. Beneath the snow-burdened evergreens something stirred and the dogs growled more threateningly. The vague outlines of a form showed close to the remains of the fire and spoke: "Don't draw your gun!"

"Eh?" Vane jerked to a sitting position and breath spurted from his lungs in a steamy plume of surprise, for it was not a harsh command, but words uttered in a voice low and musical.

"I have you covered," the soft voice went on. "Don't move!" Followed swift movement and the fire suddenly blazed as a handful of resinous branches were flung upon it.

"Well, I'll be..." exclaimed Vane, as he saw that a revolver was pointing straight at him, and that the weapon was held by a girl.

She was young and she was pretty.

She stood to Vane's left. To the north the aurora borealis fanned weird rods of tinted light in the heavens. The glow from the sky and the light from the flickering flames dancing about the girl caused her to appear almost ghostly. But the heavy revolver she held showed real enough. Ignoring the weapon, Vane got to his feet. He built up the fire until it illuminated the whole glade.

"Now," he said, taking a step towards her, "what is the meaning of this?"

She did not recoil and he saw her face more distinctly. It was a lovely face, but it bore a look of stark horror.

"You must go." She spoke insistently, her voice a-quiver with dread. "You were watched all day. You are heading for Ghost Lake. You must go no further."

Unmistakably, Vane saw, she was in deadly earnest. And strange, almost unbelievable tales had emanated from the Ghost Lake district lately—that was why he was here.

A GIRL HAD appeared to travelers, whispered tales had it—the Flame Maiden, the natives called her—and warned them to turn back. To those who did not turn back things happened. Some vanished—never to be heard of again. Others were found aimless wanderers—mentally deranged—gibbering idiots. Their ravings had been the same—they had seen the Flame Maiden. And too many men had been found in this region with unbalanced minds to longer regard the

tales as superstitious prattle. The Mounted had been ordered to investigate. And now this girl was here telling him to turn back, and emphasizing her command with a gun. Lee Vane's lips tightened and he stepped to her side.

"Young lady," he said firmly, "I am not a native to be easily scared. Drop this silly, melodramatic nonsense and get down to brass tacks."

"It is not silly, melodramatic nonsense." She shivered slightly. "I wish that it was. Look!" She swept back

the hood of her parka and stepped closer to the fire. "Don't you recognize me?"

"Good Lord! Mady Niles!" Vane exclaimed as he eyed the wealth of gleaming curls now tumbling about her face. Excerpts from an official notification flashed into his mind: "Girl, aged twenty. Violet eyes. Clear, healthy complexion. Slim, graceful build. Most striking feature, naturally curly, flame-colored hair."

Together with her father, Arthur Niles, chief engineer with the Silver Beech Radium Ore Company at Great Bear Lake, she had vanished completely one blizzardy night. And as he eyed her hair, gleaming and scintillating in the glow of the fire, Vane understood why natives to whom she had appeared and warned called her the Flame Maiden.

"Well..." he began.

SHE INTERRUPTED: "I suppose that the Mounted have been hunting for father and me ever since we disappeared?"

"Yes." Vane smiled quietly. "And this is certainly a lucky break for me; I've found you and solved the mystery of the Flame Maiden all at one stroke. If you will lead me to your father I'll take you both back."

Mady Niles shook her head, her eyes frightened, pleading.

"I wish you could, but others have tried, and—oh, you must have heard the tales."

"Others have tried?" Vane stiffened. "Explain further, please," he said gently.

"My father and I were kidnapped by a man I know only as Garfield," she began hurriedly. "Garfield has two other men with him. We are on an island in Ghost Lake. To keep others away Sloane forces me to steal upon travelers, threaten them with this pistol, order them to turn back and also reveal my hair and call myself the Flame Maiden. Most have heeded my warning; some have not, and..." She ended with a shiver.

"According to the tales I've heard, Garfield captures them and destroys their reason," Vane finished for her. "D'you expect me to believe anything so fantastic?"

"Yet it's the truth!" She stepped closer, her face livid. "I have seen them. He shuts them in a small cabin for hours. When he releases them they are out of their minds."

"Then," Vane said firmly, "this man Garfield and his two companions must be taken in charge. Please guide me to the island."

"I daren't." Again she shivered slightly. "One policeman hasn't a chance. You must get help. Remember they are three to one and armed and desperate."

"I wonder." Lee Vane smiled faintly. "Most of these 'desperate' characters submit tamely enough when it comes to a showdown, you know. But perhaps it would be better to return for the other two members of my detachment, and you are returning with me."

"No!" she protested tremulously. "I can't. If I do, then Garfield will carry out his threat to imprison my father in that cabin. I must return alone to the island."

"You're going with me," Vane said firmly. "We'll take care of your father."

"No!" She stepped back affrightedly. "Oh, look!"

Vane wheeled to follow her pointing finger. "I see nothing..." he began as he turned back, then swore as he saw that he had been tricked. The girl was gone.

Savagely he flung in pursuit. He had not gone fifty paces before he realized the hopelessness of trying to follow her through the night-shrouded woods. He made his way back to camp to await daylight.

VANE SPENT the few remaining hours until daylight conning it all over for the hundredth time.

First, the furore caused by the disappearance of the mining engineer and his daughter. Then the weird tales emanating from the Ghost Lake district. But this region was all of two hundred miles from Great Bear Lake; at first they had seen no connection between the two happenings. But now Vane knew there was a connection.

But why had Garfield kidnapped Arthur Niles and his daughter? There had been no demand for ransom; that was one thing that had made their disappearance the more baffling. And why had this man Garfield instituted a reign of terror in the district? And exactly how did he destroy the minds of the too inquisitive ones? His reason was obvious; to turn them loose to impress and frighten others. And he had succeeded; trappers, natives and others now avoided the Ghost Lake district like the plague. For over a week of hard mushing, apart from the girl, he had not met a soul.

He stirred and glanced about him. Dawn was beginning to filter through the trees. He fed and tethered the dogs. Ghost Lake was but a few miles away and he would not need the animals to follow the girl. Then he cooked and ate a hearty breakfast.

MID-MORNING found Lee Vane standing on a high bluff staring out over the frozen snow-covered expanse of Ghost Lake. An icy wind was scooping the snow all about him in whirling clouds. Through the welter of frozen particles he could discern an island a bare half-mile from shore. By peering steadily he could just make out a faint trail beneath the fresh film of snow. He started to clamber down the high bluff.

Reaching the bottom, he paused to get his service revolver from under his parka. Three men, the girl had said, so he might need it. He was still fumbling with the holster flap when something seemed to fill the air all about him with a swishing sound. His arms and head and shoulders were suddenly entrapped in something which held him powerless. It was like he was wrapped in a great spider web.

And then he saw two men. He took a vicious blow on the temple and everything went black.

Head athrob, brain dazed, Sergeant Vane opened pain-weighted eyes. He tried to struggle to his feet, and found that he was bound hand and foot. With an effort he lifted his head and at once a jarring pain burst in his side. Dully he realized that he was being kicked.

"Well, young fella," a hard voice said, "we had to take you. You was too dumb to turn back when warned."

Vane stared and saw that he was in a roughly-built shack, and that three men stood close. One of them stooped and cut the lashings about the sergeant's feet.

"Get up!" ordered the man who had first spoken.

Vane got to his feet. Then he saw the girl. She was staring at him with eyes eloquent with reproach and dread. At her side was a middle-aged man. Vane took him to be her father. In his eyes was that same look of reproach and dread.

Vane turned back to the man who had kicked him.

"Are you the man known as Garfield?" he asked, then his eyes gleamed in surprise. "Garfield," he repeated softly, eyeing the man closely, noting his auburn hair and week's growth of beard. "I've seen your face before—on a United States reward poster. 'Red' Harvey was the name under the picture."

"And a lotta good that'll do you now," the man grinned. "Sure I'm 'Red' Harvey, and here's a coupla my pals also wanted across the line for a mite of plain and fancy murdering. What're you going to do about it?"

Vane did not reply at once; his eyes were roving all about the cabin swiftly appraising. He saw his revolver and cartridge pouch hanging upon a nail, and next to it—his lips twisted—a square of heavy fish netting. So that was what had felt like a giant spider web!

"Take it all in—you ain't got long," Garfield said.

The words brought Vane's eyes back to his captors. For a moment he eyed them steadily, then: "You men are fools," he said tautly. "Better men than you have tried to get away with high-handed stuff up here. They're in jail now—or dead."

"Yeh?" Garfield grinned mockingly. "Well, we're playing safe. No killing unless we have to. We've a better scheme that makes sure no one can squeal on us. We'll fix the old man and the girl the same way when we've done with them."

"But why all this?" Vane asked.

Garfield pointed to the far end of the big room. "In case you don't know, that's gold-milling machinery."

Vane turned his head and stared.

The machinery, a small mill for crushing the rock, and mechanism for extracting the precious metal, was such as could easily be transported to this remote spot by a dog team.

Starry lumps of ore lay on the parked floor. It was high-grade stuff. The wire gold was plainly discernible. Vane understood the whole thing now. Garfield had brought the mining engineer to the island and forced him to conduct the technical operation of extracting the gold from the rich ore. His daughter's welfare had been the club which had driven the mining engineer to obey.

GARFIELD and his two companions, since they were "wanted" men, could not appear openly and file claim to the rich lode. So they had been working it secretly, and by building up the legend of the Flame Maiden, and turning loose, deprived of their reason, those who had learned too much, had sought to frighten away all who ventured near. It was a damnable scheme and it had worked.

"Simple yet airtight, eh?" Garfield taunted. His voice suddenly hardened and he thrust his face within an inch of Vane's. "And now, Mister Nosey Mountie, we're going for a little walk—ending at a cabin. In only a few hours your brain'll be gone." Followed by his two henchmen bringing Lee Vane, he led the way from the building.

The party halted before a small log cabin. "Looks just like an ordinary old shack, eh?" Garfield asked as he unlocked the door. "Well, Mountie, you'll soon learn different."

The other men pushed Vane inside, flung him on to the one bunk the building contained and lashed him securely, then left him there.

AS BEST he could Lee Vane stared about him. All he could see was that the place was absolutely bare from dirt floor to log ceiling. It was bitterly cold. The wide cracks between the logs were unchinked. And there was no bedding upon the bunk on which he lay, only a sacking-covered pillow that concealed something hard. How could just being lashed to the bunk in this rough shack destroy a man's reason? Yet...Vane recalled the others, and remembering caused him to struggle. The ropes only cut in more deeply.

Later, when he was almost numb with cold, a soft whisper made him turn his head. "Are you conscious?"

"Yes." He could just discern Mady Niles' shadow outside the wall against which he lay.

"They've gone for a load of ore, but they might be back any moment," came hurriedly. "I can't get in the door, but I'm going to try to cut you loose." A knife lashed to a stick was poked through a chink between the logs.

"Tell me if I jab you," came further whispered words.

Fumblingly the blade found a thong, commenced to saw. A faint grunt escaped Vane as the knife point pricked his arm.

"Have I cut you?" came the agonized whisper. "I can't see you at all."

"Cut away," Vane whispered back.

He could hear her frightened breathing and suddenly she gasped, as there came a loud shout and the tramping of feet.

"They've missed me! Do your best!" The knife and stick fell across Lee Vane's body and he heard her receding footsteps. Followed a rough, "Where've you been?" and the slamming of a door.

FOR A FEW seconds Vane waited, then moved an arm. It stopped. He moved it again. The veins stood out upon his forehead with the effort. Then the strand the girl had sawed upon snapped, freeing his right hand. With the knife he began to work upon the other ropes. They were of rawhide, stiff, tough. He freed himself at last and got to his feet—and suddenly clutched wildly at the wall for support, his brain reeling, fevered. The attack passed, but he realized that he had got free just in time! Something had already begun to affect him. What it was he could find out later.

A cautious testing of the door showed him that it was secured from the outside, and it was too stoutly built to break down. The place was windowless. He was still a prisoner.

Staring through a chink he saw that twilight had fallen and a light glowed in the larger cabin. In some way he must attract attention, make them come and open the door. He thought swiftly then commenced to shout, wildly, Vane backed to the bunk and stretched himself prone.

Now he could see the man's shadow as he crouched and peered through a chink. Deliberately Vane commenced to rave.

"Fooled 'em, fooled 'em! A thousand bucks expense money in my body belt and they never found it." He ended with a crazed cackle then held his breath, waiting.

He heard the man mutter to himself, then the door opened cautiously. Sighting the sergeant still lying prone he slowly advanced to his side.

"It ain't taking you long to go," he grunted, staring down. "Usually takes a day and a night. Well, I sure can use a thousand bucks in cash." Putting down the lantern he leaned over the bunk.

"Cr—ack!"

HIS SHOULDER braced against the bunk Vane put all he had into the blow, and his fist caught the man full on the jaw. He slumped sighingly. In hurried seconds Vane had lashed him to the bunk, picked up the revolver and the lantern and made his way outside.

"Everything okay?" The question was shouted to him as he emerged, by Garfield, now standing at the door of the large building.

"Sure," Vane replied, and turned his back as if to again lock the door. Came the sound of a door closing and Lee Vane breathed easier; in the gloom Garfield had thought him to be the other man. For a moment Vane stood immobile, thinking rapidly, then slowly, quietly, made his way toward the main building.

Dousing the lantern he cautiously peered through a window. Seated upon chairs he saw Garfield and the other man, and Mady Niles and her father, and the girl and her parent were in between the door and their captors. He could not enter and cover the kidnapers with his gun, for they could shoot from behind the shelter of their prisoners, and Vane did not doubt but that they would shoot.

He groped in his brain for another ruse, then stepped up to the door and rapped loudly, at once then stepping to one side. From within the cabin came startled exclamations, and he sensed suddenly stiffened attitudes and staring eyes. Followed muttered words, the scraping of a chair and heavy footsteps. The door flung open and Garfield's companion, gun in hand, appeared.

Vane's revolver slammed down on the other man's head. At the same instant Lee Vane leaped back to the window. He saw that Garfield had backed to the far wall, and was holding the girl in front of him with his left arm. His right hand held a heavy revolver. The engineer was on his feet, white-faced, his eyes on his daughter.

AGAIN VANE did some fast, cool thinking. Two men out but Garfield was still on his feet and armed and protected by the girl.

"Scared to come in, Mountie?"

"No!" As he accepted the challenge Vane hurled his revolver through the window. The sudden crash of breaking glass had the desired effect. The tensed Garfield swung swiftly toward the window and fired—and in that brief instant Vane was back at the door and had launched himself. A hundred and eighty pounds of bulleting force he sailed through the air. With both hands he grabbed for Garfield's right wrist and hung on. The heavy revolver was jerked clear and went spinning to the floor.

"Get gun! Watch other man," Vane panted as he thrust the girl to one side, then Garfield was at him.

Garfield was bigger and heavier than Lee Vane, and he fought with deadly, murderous savagery. Vane ducked and dodged, shooting in swift punches at every opening. His left caught Garfield full on the chin; he expected to see the man drop. Instead Garfield cursed through blood-flecked lips and rushed.

From the corner of an eye Vane saw that Mady and her father had tied the unconscious man, dragged him inside and shut the door. The girl had the revolver, but dared not use it. Her father, obviously ill and weak, could not throw himself effectively into the tangled whirl of hurtling bodies and flying fists. Everything depended upon Vane's unaided efforts. The knowledge braced him.

Garfield fought silently, cunningly, with every trick he knew. Again he rushed. Vane slipped.

THE FISTS twisted into an iron ball in the small of Vane's back gouged relentlessly. The sharp agony made him twist and writhe furiously in convulsive torture. Desperately he struggled—and his right hand jerked free.

He rained short jabs at the other man's face. They had no effect. Garfield tightened his grip, the veins swelling in his neck from the effort. The sight of the veins called to some unassailable portion of Vane's brain. He unclenched his fist, and, even as his spine commenced to crack, with the

wedge of his hand struck and struck again at those purple veins. Again Vane struck. Garfield staggered back, clasping a hand to his neck.

As Garfield stood there swaying on his feet, still feeling his neck, Vane swung with all his strength to the heart. Again he smashed to the same mark. Garfield swayed, sagged. Vane braced himself, then with all his weight behind it, smashed his right to the side of the neck. Garfield half turned, crumpled slowly to the floor.

For a moment Lee Vane stood panting, refilling his lungs with life-giving air, then turned to Mady Niles and her father. "Watch him!" he said briefly, turned and made his way outside to the small cabin. Not until he had his three prisoners tied securely and lined up in the main building did he voice the question that had never been absent from his mind.

"That cabin?" he asked the engineer. "What makes it work the way it does?"

A SHIVER ran through the older man as he answered:

"It is the pillow on the bunk," he said slowly. "When they kidnapped us they also stole some pitch-blend from the Silver Beech Mine. It contains radium. Not enough to kill, perhaps, but enough to do great damage to the brain."

"Good Lord!" Vane breathed. And this middle-aged engineer and his daughter had been unwilling parties to the whole devilish scheme. But that nightmare was now ended. He turned to look at Mady—a flame-haired girl regarding him steadily with lovely eyes from which all horror now had fled.

The Flame Maiden! The Ghost Lake mystery was solved but the Flame Maiden remained—infinitely real and wholly desirable. And from the look in her eyes Lee Vane had a hunch that to him she might become even more real.

THE END

A Thrilling, Romantic Novelette

Young Love In A Hurry

by Kate Tempest

leads off the July issue of

GAY LOVE STORIES

Now on sale

Tenderfoot's Duty

by Donna Reece

Sue Bowan had spurned him when he tried to warn her against the "Mr. Clane", who was purportedly giving her a job, taking care of "Clane's mother" in the wilderness. But Jay Ridley knew that the duty of an honorable man did not stop there. He had to find out what was really planned for this girl...

SUMMER, that brief interlude between the breaking up of the huge ice-packs and the return of the deep snow, had come to the north country. A land of sound, replacing for a short time the great desolation of white silence. And with summer had come the rehabitation of the woods. Bears from their winter sleep, ravens, hawks, chickadees, flocks of ptarmi-

gan, and the many other denizens of the great, wooded area. V's of wild geese went honking overhead. Truly, the north in summer was God's country.

A faint breeze, blowing up from the south, was helping Jay Ridley as he swung a broad paddle in the stern of his heavily-laden canoe. He felt as fit as the big north itself. Dark hair, deep, serious eyes, full lips, strong teeth and a well-knit frame standing close to six feet—that was Ridley. A flannel shirt, open at the throat, whip-cord trousers and deer-skin moccasins were helping him to forget his white-collar days.

He had burned his bridges behind him, casting civilization and all it had ever meant to him to the winds. His past, while nothing for any man to be ashamed of, was a closed book. He wanted freedom and in the vast Yukon region he knew, if anywhere in the world, he would find it.

AHEAD, A large lake trout broke the surface and disappeared again leaving ever-widening rings. On the bank, near at hand, a jump-too-late rabbit provided breakfast for a quick, four-legged hunter. Further north the caribou would be falling prey to wolves. It was just the law of the north. The strong or quick surviving at the expense of the weak or slow. There was nothing cruel about the arrangement any more than death was cruel to the humans far to the southward. It was the untamed Yukon.

With him, Ridley had brought supplies enough to last him until the following spring. By then he hoped to be independent of civilization with no need for going back. A good store of salt, tea, canned goods, quinine, ammunition, blankets, heavy clothing, steel traps, a tent, fishing tackle, needles and so many other things necessary to a tenderfoot, weighted down an otherwise light craft.

Zach Yarrow, the older trader in the post at the southern end of the lake, had welcomed him heartily and had given him much good advice. In return, Ridley had bought many things from him and had presented him with a fine pair of field glasses.

For the best trapping, the trader advised him to continue along up the east shore of the big lake, till he came to a shallow inlet near a huge, overhanging rock. Up that stream a few miles he would find himself in the very heart of the north, where white men had never trapped and the Indians had been content to take no more than they needed for their frugal needs.

TO JAY RIDLEY, all that had sounded like paradise. Away from everything. Freedom. A land of beginning again where dreams would have a chance to come true.

Then Old Yarrow drew, what had been a cloud across the sunlight to other adventurers. In that so perfect a region, there dwelled a band of the most ferocious Indians in all the north. These Indians had once been rulers, by their very ferociousness, of all other tribes for hundreds of miles around. Yet more like thieves or pirates than rulers, for yearly the more peaceful tribes were taxed the twenty most beautiful pelts of the season's catch. To be caught holding out a pelt meant to face a massacre. After a few wholesale massacres the ferocious Wabas had no difficulty in collecting the revenue.

But, since the advent of the white men, the oppressed tribes had banded together, obtained firearms at the price of many more pelts than the guns' worth and had repulsed every effort of the Wabas ever to take again any of their season's catch.

In return, the Wabas, dwindling in numbers under the rain of bullets which met their every attempt to regain their grip on their former, weaker brothers, turned their viciousness toward the whites of the region.

Without the firearms of the whites, the other tribes would never have es-

caped bondage. The remaining Wabas grew more and more savage. Where once they had been proud, arrogant creatures of high courage, now they had become mean, vicious killers, lurking in the dark to kill unseen.

Many a trapper's cabin had fallen in fiery ruins about his head while a band of Wabas danced in the woods about it. To rush out and be captured by them meant worse than death. Long-drawnout tortures had been practiced by those savages, each victim being inflicted by all the punishment given his predecessor plus any new deviltry which the Indians had been able to think up meanwhile.

THE OLD trader had told of some of the tortures and, immediately, Jay Ridley had begun trying to banish them from his mind. As Yarrow had said, many would-be trappers had heard the story and turned back. The beautiful pelts of the Wabas' country had continued to go into the hands of the whisky peddlers—the only men, white of skin, having free access to that region.

Ridley, while not being a superman of any sort, was by no means a coward. He had the same impulses that must have ruled the many who had turned back on hearing of the savages of the north region. And of the few who had gone on and never came back. Even when a man thinks he is all through with his own kind, life still holds a bit of sweetness and a few pelts seem but a small reward for which to risk one's self.

Yet in Jay Ridley there was the primitive desire to fight. To even turn aside seemed too much like running away from a few blood-thirsty savages. With an automatic, a rifle, and plenty of ammunition, a man was well equipped to take care of himself. Since his eighteenth birthday, Ridley had always prided himself on being a man. In spite of the risks, he chose to go ahead where others turned back.

"Well, I wish you luck, young feller," Zach Yarrow had said with a handclasp as Ridley left the post. "That's one thing you'll need lots of and no one can sell you a bit."

FROM THE peaceful appearance of the country about him, Ridley might never have suspected that to go ashore might mean never to push off again. It was all too clean and big. Great, billowy clouds sailed majesticly across the wide, blue sky, reflected with the wooded shores in the deep blue of the lake, making two perfect pictures—one upside down.

Tenderfoot that he was, Ridley kept far enough from the shore to make the accurate shooting of arrow or rifle difficult. He needed his precious cargo and a hole through either himself or his frail craft would cause no little annoyance.

At dusk he passed a small island, noting mentally that it would make a fine camp site for the night. Nevertheless, he kept right on as if the island had not been there. After nightfall he swung landward and, in the darkness along the shore, he silently made his way back to the island. He already felt like one of the wild things that remained alive only by its quickness and cunning.

A small fire on the lake side of the bit of land sufficed for his evening meal of bacon and beans. A glowing pipe brought a feeling of contentment and security. Then, with the coolness of the night coming on, he rolled in his blankets and listened to the soothing lap-lapping of the little waves against the shore until he fell into deep slumber.

DAY WAS breaking when Jay Ridley awoke. He was cold. The early morning swim he had planned was postponed and a vigorous face-washing in the cold water took its place. The swinging of an ax and three cups of hot coffee soon had him feeling normal again.

By the broad light of day, the

thought of savages and torture seemed remote indeed. With a whoopee at the sheer joy of living and being free, he shoved off and sent the canoe northward with a speed and sureness that surprised himself.

For three days he paddled northward. Then the lake gave way to the wide, shallow stream at the overhanging rock that Zach Yarrow had told him to watch for. The distant shores were replaced by the shadows of the nearby spruce and pines. Beaver and otter splashed the water ahead and the woods on each side abounded in small game and birds. A hunter's paradise enfolded him and night enfolded all.

A few miles further up that stream and within the next few days, the vigorous chopping of an axe could have been heard. Trees fell, branches were hacked off, then the trunks were cut into certain lengths and notched near the ends.

As the cabin progressed, Ridley found more and more satisfaction in the work. He was doing something. He was really living. With the usual worries and cares of civilization left so far behind, his new life was a glorious holiday.

Rolling logs up skids and into place was hard work. The muscles in Ridley's back and shoulders developed almost overnight. Each day the work seemed easier, yet actually it was harder with lifting the logs higher. Each night there was a little more pride in his accomplishment and a bit more sureness to his step. Ridley was developing the self-reliance so necessary to a lone man in the north country. But he also was developing a little disregard for the old trader's warning, which was not good.

With the cabin finished, "chinked" with moss and mud, the spruce roof poles covered with the canvas from the tent, the big, stone fireplace accommodating logs that laid down to burn and with a quartzite mantelpiece on which to set his pipes and tobacco, Ridley felt well satisfied with his handicraft. A pioneer indeed.

ONE EVENING as he sat on a stump near the cabin dressing a rabbit, an arrow came out of the woods nearby and buried its head in the cabin wall behind him. Before he could get his rifle, he knew it was useless to waste a shot. But he fired once in the direction from which the arrow had come, more in answer than in hopes of hitting anything.

The next day he set about building a stockade about his cabin. All about the cabin and twenty feet from it, he dug a deep trench. Trees of all sizes, the nearest to the cabin, were felled, cut into the proper length and pointed sharply at one end.

Even by working early and late, it was a week before he had the stockade finished. Then, around on the inside of the fence where anyone climbing over would strike, he strung a length of fish-line through hook-eyes. Anything striking that line would cause it to pull the trigger of his old six-shooter which was set, pointed out, through a small port-hole in the cabin wall.

That arrangement was fine until one rainy night the moisture caused the line to tighten until a false alarm resulted. Needless to say, Jay Ridley slept no more that night, but had a good laugh on himself the next morning when he realized what had been the cause. From then on he made rainy day allowances by lengthening the string.

He took the arrow which had struck the cabin, broke it in two, nailed the pieces crosswise to a tall stick, then nailed the stick to the gate of his stockade. That was his challenge to his unseen foe.

THE SUMMER turned into fall. The Indians, outside of that one arrow, had left Ridley unmolested. Investigation would have shown that, while their hatred toward the white race had lessened in no perceptible

degree, their drunkenness had increased until their huge store of furs, hidden, in a deep, cold cave, had shrunken until a mere handful of pelts were left. But even in their drunken stupor, their craftiness had kept their silver fox pelts hidden.

The squaws, too, were lying about almost as drunk as their braves. The storing away of dried fish, berries, roots and other food for the winter was being neglected totally. Disaster threatened but was ignored by nearly the whole tribe under the hilarious spell of the alcohol.

The medicine-man, too, was a drunkard. His name meaning Great Mountain Shaker was forgotten as his shaking hands reached for more and more liquor. The natives followed his lead in ignoring the protests of the vicious, young chief, Eagle Feather.

On seeing his people becoming a worthless lot, unable to support him in his desired ease of life, Eagle Feather bade them all go to the dogs, strode to the fur cave and taking the finest of the pelts, dared anyone to oppose him. The shock of his action made the tribe almost sober for a short time, but while the whisky lasted, it banished their troubles.

Nat Ordway, being a crafty whisky peddler, took but small quantities at a time to the Indians. In that manner, he kept the supply low and the value high. He knew they were holding out the finest of the pelts from him, but he retaliated by cutting the alcoholic content of the stuff he passed off as whisky.

He stayed later than usual that trip, hoping to get those silver fox pelts. Trip after trip from his secret cache of liquor to the Wabas' village netted him but ordinary furs.

WHEN ORDWAY found out about Eagle Feather's breaking with the tribe, and especially of his taking the prime pelts, he was greatly disturbed. Eagle Feather would never trade them for whisky. Gladly would Nat have murdered the Indian for them, but Nat Ordway was afraid of the young brave. To miss would be to die horribly and Nat wanted to live easily. And he had no idea where to look for the self-made exile.

But Nat was due to meet him soon. On his way back from the Wabas' village he was suddenly confronted by the young chief. Ordway thought that his time had come. He thought the Indian was going to murder him for the condition of the tribe, but he was wrong.

Eagle Feather, the light of madness in his eyes, grunted a greeting which held little respect.

"How, Eagle Feather," Ordway greeted with forced ease.

The Indian stared in stony silence.

"Come," he finally said, and without a backward glance, turned and slipped into the woods.

Ordway followed with mixed feelings. Was he heading toward priceless skins—or death?

After ten minutes' walk, the Indian halted by a flat rock. From beneath, in a little crevice, he drew forth a beautiful pelt. A silver fox in the finest of condition.

"This I give for gun," he stated.

Ordway hesitated, turning a problem over in his mind. To give this Indian a gun would be to give the Indian long-range power, thereby making him equal to a white man. Nat Ordway liked to keep at least one ace in the hole and Nat was thinking of no one but himself.

FINALLY he hit upon the bit of strategy of giving the young chief a revolver, thus keeping him from any accurate, long-range shooting. Nat knew that placing any gun in the hands of Eagle Feather was one of the worst things he could do, but as usual he was thinking only of Ordway and a nice profit. It had been said that Nat would have sold his mother as a slave for a little money and Nat had laughed loudly and asked why not.

"I'll give you this gun, Eagle Feather," he offered, extending the revolver. He felt like shooting the Indian with it instead, but, with the craft Eager Feather was capable of, he knew the other prime pelts would never be found after his death.

"How many bullets?" bargained the Indian.

"Six boxes," promptly returned the whisky-peddler.

"I take."

The transfer was made and both seemed well satisfied. The Indian was to return to Ordway's present camp with him for the boxes of shells.

"How about those other skins, Eagle Feather?"

"They are mine."

"Yeah, I know," agreed Nat in none too good humor, "but what do you want for them?"

The Indian stopped and looked sharply into Ordway's face. A mad light burned in Eagle Feather's eyes. His lips moved but he seemed reluctant to speak.

Realizing that he had a small fortune within his grasp, Ordway was desperate mentally, yet cautious physically.

"Name it, Eagle Feather, I get you anything—one hundred blankets? Long gun and one hundred boxes bullets? What do you want?"

"I want..." again Eagle Feather hesitated; then abruptly he burst out, "young, white woman!"

IF NAT WAS surprised at the demand, he failed to show it. The furs were as good as his at that moment. Eagle Feather would keep his word and exchange for a woman. Well could Ordway afford to go clear to Dawson, if necessary, to get one. To him, the exchange held no more scruples than the swapping of horses might have done.

"How many like this?" he asked, holding up the silver fox.

Eagle Feather counted off eight on his fingers.

"Not for eight, Eagle Feather. Those and two more—ten—no less."

"I will give ten when I have young, white woman," Eagle Feather stated drawing himself up to regal bearing as if daring Ordway to doubt his word.

"In five weeks I will bring her to the little river one day north," stated the whisky-peddler.

The Indian grunted in reply, but the wild light in his eyes seemed to have been fanned into a flame. But once had he seen a young, white woman, but never had he forgotten or lost his desire for one.

With a white squaw he would, indeed, be a great chief. Then he would kill this spoiler of men as he would a snake. Unknown to the tribe he would kill him—it would be too late then for them to object. Gradually he would rebuild his people to the strength and power that was the Wabas' rightful heritage.

The next day the tribe was routed out of their drunken stupor by the hard-hitting, mad, young chieftain who had come back to reclaim them in spite of themselves. He cuffed them mightily, squaws and braves. He spat on them for their filth and ordered the village moved to a cleaner spot.

EVERY BOTTLE he could find was broken. Any Indian too drunk to move was tossed into a cold stream nearby. The Shaker of Mighty Mountains became a humble "yes" man. Well he knew the viciousness and strength of Eagle Feather's forefathers and little wanted to feel the brunt of the force now dominating the young chief.

The new village was soon in order. Braves were assigned to food-gathering expeditions and warned against returning empty-handed. The squaws toiled mightily at the gathering of winter fuel and the sewing of heavy garments.

Where disaster had faced them in the cold months, the relentless driving of Eagle Feather took them into a po-

sition of security, such as had not been known in a score of years.

Although it was not the mating season, Eagle Feather ordered marriage wherever possible. The tribe must not only be perpetuated, it must be made to grow.

But the procedure by marriage was too slow. Eagle Feather had had his ambition aroused. Raids were made on villages to the south. The unsuspecting Indians there fell easy prey to the Wabas. The male captives were killed at once. The women and girls were taken back to the Wabas' village. With pride, Eagle Feather watched his tribe grow.

Soon now it would be time for him to meet the whisky-peddler. Then he would show the tribe what it meant to feast in true Indian style. And that young, white trapper, up on Little Low Water, would be captured and brought in for torture. Again the Wabas would be a great, blood-thirsty tribe. A few guns had been taken in the surprise raids, but until he killed the whisky-man there would be no shells for them.

AS NAT ORDWAY had figured, the taking of a girl from nearer than Dawson would have, indeed, been risky business. There were so few one would readily have been missed and traced. In Dawson he could merely advertise for one to be a companion to his old mother while he was off visiting his traps, eh? Of course the girl would be gone all winter but would be well repaid.

A girl would fall for that line all right. He would try to get one with no strings on her. One without relatives to squawk or look for her. What an easy little fortune for a smart fellow.

Eagle Feather, oh, he would be good to her. An Indian queen she was going to be. What an honor! Queen Utakher of the Wabas. Jake found a good deal of amusement and a greater amount of satisfaction in his little plan.

At Dawson he set himself up in a hotel, bought some store clothes, and advertised for a companion for his old mother.

The first two or three he talked to were hard females and Ordway was not taking any chances with that much at stake. He would wait until he found one more suitable.

THE THIRD day after he advertised, she came in. Nat could only sit and look. Surely the breaks were all with him this trip. Here she was, made to order for the part.

A short dress stopped at a pair of shapely calves which were clothed in bright-colored woolen stockings, rolled just below the knee. A pair of large trusting eyes seemed to say, "Be good to me—please!" Blonde hair and white, even teeth made one think of those big, mama dolls the traders sometimes sell at Christmas time. For this girl Eagle Feather should give fifteen prime pelts.

"I'm Sue Bowen and I saw your ad," she stated, it seemed, in a hopeful voice.

"Well, Sue, as I said in the ad, I want a girl as companion for my old mother. We live in a cabin way up at the head of Great Blue Lake, a long way from here. The girl who takes the job won't get back before next summer, but the pay is good and there's hardly no work at all. Just keep my old mother from being lonesome. I ain't home much—away at the traps most of the time."

He paused, wondering if he had made it sound too good. But apparently not. The girl, evidently, believed every word.

"I—I think I would like that," she said.

"How about your folks—wouldn't they object to you going away for a long time?"

"I haven't any folks—there's just me. I used to work over in the dance hall but I had to get out. The boss said if I didn't want to be nice to the customers I had no business being there."

"Well, Sue, you won't be bothered with those customers any more. You're hired. A hundred a month and found. When can you start?"

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Clane. I can start any time."

Ordway coughed and cleared his throat. The "Mr. Clane" had caught him off guard. He had forgotten for the moment that he had adopted that name for the duration of his stay in Dawson.

"That's fine—supposing we start tonight. That will give us time to buy you some trail clothes. Did you have dinner yet?"

"No—not since the day before yesterday—only some bread."

"Well, you just come along with me and see how much you can eat."

IF FOLKS in Dawson saw Sue Bowen and Ordway together, they showed no thought or care. Dawson was a city of transients. Strange partners came and went continually. If a nice-looking girl happened to be with a coarse-looking man, that was her business. A possible shrug of the shoulders might be evoked.

And that also applied to when they left Dawson that night at dark. Music jangled from the lighted doorways of barrooms and dance halls.

At one place a drunken fellow leered at Sue, and said, "Hello, Kid, leave your Pop and let's go places, huh?" At the same time he staggered down the steps and put a detaining hand on her arm .

Ordway hit the harmless drunk a terrific blow on the jaw and the fellow went down. Seizing the girl, Nat hurried her along.

"We'd better get along," he said, "before somebody thinks he's dead and stops us."

Any misgivings the girl might have had about going into the woods with this stranger, were banished. He would look out for her, and any man who thought enough of his mother to do what was doing for her must be a good man. Almost anything would be better than staying in Dawson, fighting drunken men and slowly starving.

JAY RIDLEY, feeling out of sorts with himself one crisp morning, of a sudden decided to visit Zach Yarrow, the trader before winter set in. His tobacco supply had not stood up as he had expected and coffee also would need replacing before the spring thaws would release him.

Storing his movable things in the secret cellar he had laboriously dug, to prevent thieving Indians from carrying them off during his absence, he took a few provisions and his rifle and set out southward. He planned to spend a couple of days there and counting the four days' trip each way, he would be gone about ten days. By then the fall would be about gone and with new fur coats on his four-legged neighbors, it would be time to get busy.

When he arrived at the post there were two white customers there. One, a rough-looking man, the other, a pretty girl. For a moment, Jay felt misgivings about burying himself so far from such interesting creatures as girls.

As she turned, he looked deep into her eyes. He knew that his face, while not handsome, was fairly passable and his good build called for some flicker of interest as is always present when youth meets youth, especially in the wilds. But, hardly believing his own eyes, he met cold rebuff. The girl ignored him further, deliberately turning her back.

"Wow!" thought Ridley, "wonder what I ever did to deserve that?"

But try as he would to make himself believe she was not worth bothering with, he could not keep his eyes from her. Sitting on the further end of the counter, he watched the man with her make some purchases, seize her by the arm and hurry down to the lake. There they embarked in a bright, blue canoe and headed northward, the

girl swinging a paddle, gracefully but not very effectively, in the bow.

"Who's your sociable friends, Zach?" called Ridley over his shoulder from the doorway where he stood watching the girl.

The old man came from behind the counter and stood at Ridley's side.

"Now, Jay, that's got me worried. That there man is Nat Ordway, the whisky-peddler, but try an' prove it! The girl is new in this region an' she ain't wearin' any weddin' ring either."

HE SIGHED and then took a big bite from a plug of dark tobacco.

"When they come ashore," he continued, "I heard her say something about buying something for his mother, and he told her to never mind—just buy for herself. Now, Ordway ain't got no mother—at least not up here, so it looks bad! Yes, sir, it looks mighty bad! Furthermore, she distinctly called him 'Mr. Clane' onct."

Jay Ridley stood in deep thought for a moment.

"Say, Zach, did she look like a rounder to you?"

"No, Jay, she didn't. That's why I say it looks bad."

"Well, I'm going up there and tell her just what she's up against. Maybe it's none of my affair, but I'm still a man and it looks like a man's duty!"

"You're more'n' half right, Son, but keep your gun handy—Nat Ordway won't like it one bit!"

HARDLY had Yarrow finished talking when Ridley was out of the post and racing for his canoe. Twilight had replaced the gray afternoon and night fell swiftly.

Being much more adept and without a load in the canoe, Ridley sent the craft skimming off the water like a veteran. Almost before he realized it, he was nearing the island where he had camped in his former trip.

There was a small fire there. Cautiously he swung the bow and landed on the opposite side from where they had camped. Care would be necessary if he was to help the girl escape from her perilous situation.

As he topped the little rise that shielded their camp, Ridley saw the girl washing the tin dishes that had just been used for supper in the lake. Ordway lay back on a blanket smoking a pipe, a picture of contentment. He had made no move that might have frightened his companion. He was about to pick up a nugget in furs, which meant more to him than a hundred women.

"Lie still, Ordway!"

The sharp command set Nat rigid with mixed emotions, yet he knew better than to reach for his gun. The girl turning, saw a tense figure pointing a gun at Mr. Clane. It was the young man she had seen at the trading post. She started forward.

"Listen, Sister," the clear voice continued, "you just walk over to Mr. Ordway, gently lift his gun and keep from between us. Hold it in your fingertips and drop it in front of me."

The girl looked questioningly at Ordway.

"Go ahead, Sue. Do what the young fool says. He's crazy enough to shoot us both."

The girl complied with bad grace.

"Now maybe we can talk," suggested Ridley. "Believing it my duty, I followed you here to warn you against the man you are with," he said looking at Sue Bowen.

"I am sure that was very thoughtful of you," she said with very dry sarcasm.

JAY WINCED under the sting.

"Mr. Clane is not Mr. Clane at all," he continued nevertheless, "he's Nat Ordway, the rum-peddler—sells whisky to the Indians. And Nat Ordway has no mother. I think you should go back with me while you still have the chance."

"And I think you should mind your own business, whoever you are! I am working for Mr. Clane or Ordway or

whatever his name might be and that's my affair. He is one of the few gentlemen in the north country. Is that answer enough to still the white man's urge to do his duty?"

With that she turned her back on him and strode back to her dishwashing.

Jay Ridley burned with the desire to shake her, but, as she had just said, it was none of his business.

"Well, Tenderfoot, you got your answer—beat it!" Nat Ordway had won.

RIDLEY made a hasty, humiliated exit. Back to Zach Yarrow he went and told the story.

"Too bad," observed Zach sadly. "She looked like a bright lass, too."

Ridley stayed only half the time he had planned, then set off toward his cabin. Somehow he could not get the thought of the girl out of his mind. He knew she would be needing him sooner or later, but what could he do about it? Just mind his own business—that's what she had told him to do.

Eagle Feather, in the short month since bargaining with Ordway, had grown to be quite a figure among the tribes of the north. Many red-skinned maidens were offered to him as his squaws, but Eagle Feather was to have a white squaw. He told no one. He wanted the surprise of it to travel from mouth to mouth as his other, recent successes had done. But egotism was smothering his sagacity.

Almost gaily, he went to meet Ordway who would bring the girl as he had promised. Eagle Feather took the ten prize pelts and the revolver. He had learned how to use the gun and had become quite a marksman, in his own opinion.

At the appointed place and time, Eagle Feather stepped from his place of concealment. He had gazed on the young white woman and his eyes had told him she was all he could have wished for.

"How," greeted the tall, young chief.

The girl turned an inquiring gaze on the Indian.

"How," returned Ordway. "Sue, meet Chief Eagle Feather of the Wabas tribe."

The brave stood motionless, regarding her. Like, or dislike, neither showed on his countenance.

The girl smiled but not very bravely. Her woman's intuition was telling her something very uncomforting.

"Eagle Feather, we keep our bargain, eh?"

"Yes," replied the brave.

"O.K., here's the girl."

With those words he reached for the pelts hanging over Eagle Feather's arm and hand.

The girl could not believe her ears. She was being sold to a brave. They were miles from the nearest white man. Oh, why had she been so hasty when that young stranger had tried to warn her?

"You beast!" she cried, springing at Ordway, a wild clawing fury. "I won't go—you'll take me back!"

Tears were streaming down her face. Ordway knocked her from her feet. Dazed, she lay on the ground, watching with unbelieving eyes.

Again Ordway reached for the furs. As his hand lifted them from the Indian's arm, an explosion occurred. Ordway fell, blood spurting from a hole in his chest. In Eagle Feather's hand, which had been hidden under the pelts, there lay a smoking revolver.

GATHERING up the pelts as Ordway gasped his last, Eagle Feather motioned for the girl to follow. She struggled to her feet not knowing whether she was glad or sorry at Ordway's well-deserved death.

Lightly the Indian strode through the deep woods. Once Sue ran away, thinking she would rather die in the wilderness than go with the red man. The treatment she received at his hands, as he caught her by the hair, quickly put an end to that thought.

At the village, one brave, thinking

a new torture victim had been brought in, thrust a sharp stick at her. Immediately the chief whirled, seized the man bodily and raising him high, hurled him savagely to the ground. What bones had been left whole by the awful punishment were quickly battered and broken by the savage kicking of Eagle Feather's feet.

The girl was made violently ill by the terrible scene and had to be carried the rest of the way. At the lodge of the chief, Eagle Feather deposited her on a bearskin which had been spread over a bed of pine boughs. Calling an old squaw, he gave her terse instructions in their strange tongue and strode out. The old crone brewed tea from herbs and, with a toothless smile, presented it to Sue. The girl tasted a little, then drank the rest. Almost immediately she was asleep.

EVEN THOUGH Jay Ridley had returned to the post and spent that night and most of the next day, his light canoe and long, sweeping strokes of the paddle brought him to the little river on which his cabin was located not many hours behind Ordway and the girl.

Zach Yarrow's words were still running through his mind: "One arrow they sent you, Lad? Well, that shows they know you are there and I'm surprised you haven't heard more from them. But you will, so don't get careless. You never can tell what those devils will do till it's all over!"

Paddling cautiously up the shallow inlet, on the watch for hidden foes, Ridley saw the bright, blue canoe in which Ordway had brought the girl north. It lay on the bank, unconcealed, as if it's owner had been expecting to make a quick getaway.

Jay, still smarting from the girl's verbal lashing, was intrigued. Perhaps Ordway had shown his hand. Ridley wanted to be on hand when that occurred if for nothing else than to have her appeal to him for help.

Fifty feet from the canoe he stumbled across the body of Jake Ordway. A bullet had entered his chest at close range, killing him almost instantly. A look of surprise was still in the unclosed eyes.

Ridley became more alert than he had ever been during his months in the woods. He studied the footprints which approached and left the body. The girl had accompanied Ordway to the spot and had left with an Indian.

Why Ordway had been killed mattered little. If the girl had done it, she was justified. It was very evident that Ordway had brought the girl here for the Indian and deserved worse than killing.

ALONG THE game trail, Ridley followed the tracks. At one place the girl had evidently broken away but had been caught and brought back again.

As daylight began to fade, Ridley came within sound of an Indian village. Drums were being beaten in a mad rhythm. Some kind of celebration was going on. Fear that it might be the torturing of the white girl left him cold. He hastened forward, and finding no guards about, crept near.

With but his automatic and a few full clips, he knew that whatever he might accomplish would be by stealth rather than force.

A huge fire had been lighted in the center of the great circle of wigwams. In the space between the fire and the tepees, there danced and shouted a mad ring of savages, waving bows, arrows, spears and warclubs. The drums beat faster and the dancers yelled louder. Great chunks of meat were roasting over the flames on crude spits, turned continually by young Indian boys. Scanning the motley assembly of dancers and spectators, Jay Ridley could find no white face among them.

Even knowing that one slip would cost him his life, he determined to find and, if humanly possible to do so, rescue her—even though it was none of his business, he thought grimly.

FROM A lodge decorated by bright ornaments and colored clay markings, there stepped a tall, grave, young Indian, fairly handsome except for the high, strong cheek-bones of his race.

Holding his hands aloft, he called for silence in a tongue that was totally foreign to the white watcher.

The tall, young Indian spoke clearly and slowly. He was emphasizing the importance of something or other. Then, with a backward sweep of his arm, he drew the white girl from the lodge he had appeared from. Behind, and pushing her, was an old woman.

Ridley had found his objective. Carefully, yet with haste, he circled the village, coming up behind the chief's lodge. There were no guards about for who was there to miss or attempt to rescue the girl?

Sue, on being released, crept back into the dim interior of the dirty abode. Her recent experience had humbled her mightily. There she prayed without the faintest hope of succor.

The chief, still outside, called the braves forward and, in a voice that spoke ill of failure, sent them to bring in the young white trapper, alive, for torture as part of his mating celebration.

In ten minutes the camp was deserted, save for the youngest and oldest of the natives. Eagle Feather returned to the wigwam where the girl lay trembling with fear.

To act with any hope of success was to strike at once and boldly. Although he had not understood why, he was thanking his lucky stars that the braves had been sent out of the village. With sort of a plan, Ridley again circled the wigwams. He had noticed that, while most of the tepees were made of caribou skins sewn with the sinews of deer, there were many made of bark. At a point furthest from the lodge wherein the girl lay, Ridley gathered some twigs and set fire to one of the tepees.

Before the blaze was discovered, it had gained a good start and Ridley was back at the ornamented wigwam. Crying the alarm, the old braves, women and children ran to fight the flame which soon spread to two other wigwams. Even the old crone from the chief's lodge went to scream inarticulate instructions, to which none paid any heed.

The chief remained with the girl, regarding fire-fighting beneath his dignity.

IT WAS Jay Ridley's moment to act and he did—not because he was unafraid, but because he was afraid not to. It was his only chance. He knew that it would be either himself or the chief never leaving the wigwam alive, but meanwhile the girl would have a chance to escape.

With a curse for being such a fool as to throw himself away over a thankless female, he plunged into the lodge. A grunt of surprise burst from Eagle Feather. Ridley swung his automatic, fired a shot at the rising figure's head in the dim light and missed. Then the automatic jammed.

A second roar burst in a flame across the narrow space. A shot tore through the fleshy part of Jay's thigh and he went down just in time to save his head from being blown off by a following shot.

He wrenched the brave's feet from beneath him and Eagle Feather fell heavily, his gun being knocked out of his hand. A kick in the stomach sent Ridley sprawling. Then Eagle Feather was upon him. Great arms, fingers, legs, feet and teeth assailed him. Lights flashed within his head with every thump he received. He was overmatched. With a thought to the horror of what lay ahead of him when he was overpowered—the torture that would celebrate the girl's wedding, Ridley called on his body to do what seemed impossible.

With a mighty lunge he threw the tall savage from him. His fingers groped about in the dark for his gun to use as a club, but in vain. He tried

to call out to the girl to run, but was again struck by the vicious savage.

Again they went down and again Ridley took a terrible pummeling. His short, jolting blows seemed to have no effect on the brave. Jay's remaining strength was giving out. He could feel himself weakening, but some inner urge kept him, first punching and then choking his adversary.

THE POWERFUL fingers of the brave groped for his eyes. Ridley bit them till his mouth was full of blood. His nose felt as if it had been torn from his face and his body, now nearly naked, had been battered until it felt as though it was nothing but a bloody pulp.

The strength of the brave seemed everlasting. His blows seemed to gain force. Ridley was almost at his mercy. It was the beginning of the end, but he would go down like a man. The weight of the savage seemed to keep the breath from his body.

Advancing and retreating about them was Sue Bowen, an earthen jar in her hand, looking for an opportunity to help. But the antagonists were all over the place. Two animals could never have fought so viciously or unrelentingly.

They were still for a moment. Apparently the rescuer was beaten. But, no, it was a trick. As the brave raised himself, sure of victory, Ridley's knee struck him with terrific force in the groin. At the same instant the earthen jug wielded by the girl struck him heavily on the head. Either blow would have felled the savage—both put him beyond need of their further attention.

IN A FLASH Jay Ridley was on his feet looking for his automatic. Finding it, he released the jammed shell and slipped a fresh clip into place. The girl was crying and dabbing his battered face.

"Don't bother, Sister, it may be lots worse before we're free."

"It's all my stupid fault," she was sobbing.

Motioning for the girl to follow, he started out.

Drawn by the gunshots in the chief's wigwam, many of the tribe had gathered outside. It was against the tribal law for them to enter under any circumstances. To go out would be to attract many arrows. Ridley withdrew hastily.

For a slight movement, he rewarded Eagle Feather with another whack on the head. Then with his knife, he cut a slit in the rear wall and gingerly stepping out, helped the girl.

As they fled toward the woods a great shout broke behind them. Arrows flitted all about, only one finding a mark. That went through the calf of Jay's right leg. Turning, he fired two shots at the pursuers, downing one. The others fell back.

Off to the north they heard a revolver shot. Rod grinned in spite of his pain.

"That was my alarm clock," he told the girl as they ran through the woods. "The braves have climbed the stockade."

"Where can we go?" she panted.

"River—canoe!" he gasped in reply.

As fast as they ran, it seemed that the Indians behind were gaining again. Striking the game trail, Ridley sent the girl ahead with a shove, turned, fired two more shots, causing the pursuers to stop, and again was with the girl, running like mad.

Again the Indians came on. Perhaps they feared the wrath of Eagle Feather, should the whites be permitted to escape. Ridley glanced back. As he did so, the girl stumbled and fell heavily over the body of Nat Ordway. All seemed lost. Ridley fired another shot back at the Indians. With so much gained and the river so near he could not give up without a little more struggle. He seized the unconscious girl in his arms, and in spite of his wounds, sped like a deer to the canoes.

His canoe, being closest to the wa-

ter, he dumped the girl into that and pushed off. As he passed Ordway's canoe he had wanted to put a shot through it, but, with the girl in his arms and the Indian pack again at his heels, he had no chance.

A yell at the water's edge told him that his pursuers had arrived. They lost no time in setting Ordway's canoe afloat and four in that continuing the chase while those left on the bank sent showers of arrows.

Jay kept to the shadows and paddled for life. He wanted to outdistance those following along the bank before trying to halt the other canoe. Then arrows from the following craft became the real menace. He had to risk all on the remaining shots in his automatic.

Resting his paddle, he turned with all the calmness he could muster. The moon, breaking over the trees, gave him a clear target, but it also helped his enemies. Savagely they plied their paddles. Their violent rocking caused their arrows to fly in all directions.

The Indian in the stern, seeing Ridley stop paddling, swung the craft at an angle to give those seated in the bottom, with the bows and arrows, a better chance. But his swinging was his undoing. Rod's bullet struck him. Over the side he went, taking his paddle with him.

ALMOST simultaneously an arrow struck Jay's hand, knocking the automatic overboard.

Both craft were at a loss. In the Indian's canoe there was little control until one of them, taking the bow paddle, clambered onto the stern seat. From then on their progress was comparatively slow. Jay quickly took advantage of the confusion. Disregarding as much as possible his new wound, he struck out with the paddle putting much precious space between his canoe and the following one.

But his advantage was short-lived. The pursuers again gained. Too, they were conserving their arrows, waiting until they got within a more accurate shooting range. He was paddling on nerve alone, exhaustion was about to pull him down to defeat. His battered, tired body cried for respite, but the brain kept urging it on and on and on. A thought presented itself. With a kick of the paddle he splashed water over the form of the girl, some of it striking her face.

She moaned and opened her eyes. Instantly she started to spring up, almost upsetting the craft.

"Lie down and be still!" he commanded.

"Are they—will they—" she stammered.

"No, they won't!" he answered with more conviction than he felt.

He paddled harder, but failed to increase his lead on the other craft. It was just a matter of time when the pursuers would be the victors.

Another thought entered his head. His rifle. Where was that? He had left it in the bow of the canoe.

"Sister, see if you can find my rifle —I think it's up in the bow," he said.

The most welcome sight in the world was the rifle as the girl handed it to him. With a bloody grin, Jay Ridley felt a great weight lifted from his shoulders. Deliberately he let the savages gain. Then he fired four shots, raking the pursuing craft from stem to stern. The chase was over.

THREE DAYS later, Ridley, a limping but happy woodsman and Indian fighter, landed at the trading post. The beautiful Sue Bowen was with him.

Zach Yarrow came hobbling out to greet them.

"Well, Lad! What have you been doing?" he asked, much concerned.

"Oh, just getting myself a life job looking out for someone," he answered with a smile at the girl in the bow, "isn't that right, Sister?"

"It's right, Jay, but can't you think of a better name than that to call me?"

"I'll try, Sweetheart!"

The Marshal Stood Alone

by Olin Grant

Nancy Kline was new to the West; but even so, she could see that Clint Jensen was alone against the evil forces that threatened to engulf this town...

GRIMLY, Clint Jensen tightened the cinches under the gray horse's belly. He straightened up, a tall, square-jawed man with a golden mane. There was a dangerous light in his gray eyes as he walked the mare out to the front of the livery stable.

Younger brother, Duke, was waiting for him at the door. Duke was twenty-five, four years younger than the ex-town marshal of Rimrock. He sat astride a big black gelding, watching Clint, a cigar clamped between his lips, dark eyes glittering with anger. He was tall, but not as tall as Clint, He had the older brother's high cheek bones and the straight, thin nose.

"Reckon it's time to ride," Clint observed. His thin lips curled in contempt as he listened to the sounds farther down the street, knowing what they meant. The town of Rimrock was going to give them a send-off, and they would like to do it with a rail, but they were afraid of the Jensen guns.

Duke Jensen's big hand caressed the butt of the .45 hanging from his left side. The younger brother shot from the left and he shot straight. The three Brislows lying peacefully in the little cemetery on the hill bore ample testimony to this fact.

"Maybe," Duke said hopefully, "they'll try to stop us, Clint."

The man with the golden hair laughed coldly. He thought of sheriff Johnny Wales. The sheriff of Green County would sell his soul before he got up enough nerve to pull a weapon on either of the Jensens.

They rode slowly down the side street and out into the open. They saw the crowd gathered outside the ramshackle Palace Hotel. Moving out into the middle of the dusty street, they walked the horses quietly toward the crowd. The way out of Rimrock led past the Palace Hotel. They could have taken another side street and avoided this but neither man had considered it.

"The Brislows still have friends in

Rimrock," Clint said softly. "We'll have to ride careful-like, Duke." He knew how the Brislows and their friends fought. Even while riding down the center of the street they could expect a bullet in the back at any moment.

The crowd saw them coming and the uproar died down. Slowly, a path opened as the two horsemen approached. Clint Jensen saw Johnny Wales in the crowd. The sheriff had never liked the Jensens because they'd kept him in the shade. The timid little man with the silver badge and the silent gun had advised the town committee against hiring them in the beginning.

"This town," committee man Bill Farris had said, "is big enough to support a marshal, an' we need one."

The Jensens had ridden in from Dodge City where Clint had made a reputation. He'd cleaned out the tough Daley bunch and Dodge was the better for it. Rimrock had the Brislows and other lawless elements. The Wells-Fargo stage had been the object of their depredations. Cattle rustlers had been rampant in Rimrock and the honest ranchers wanted action.

The Jensens had given them action. In a pitched battle on the main street of Rimrock, after several warnings, they had shot up the Brislows, the worst offenders.

Ed and Dale Brislow along with cousin Red, were known to be in the cattle business illegally. The town of Rimrock knew about it unofficially but the Brislows rode through the streets whenever they chose and sheriff Johnny Wales looked the other way. Ed and cousin Red, had reputations as gun men.

"This town," Clint told Ed Brislow, "ain't big enough for two families like ours. Reckon you better stay away, Brislow."

BIG ED HAD laughed in the face of the elder Jensen. He'd heard of Clint's reputation but he was unafraid. Two days later, it was rumored the Brislows had neatly turned two hundred Bar B cattle over on their own spread and were revising brands prior to shipping them on to the railroad.

They had shot up rancher, Tom Henderson, when the old man wanted to ride out and see for himself. Clint and Duke were preparing to ride out to the Brislow ranch, when the Brislows trotted quietly down the street.

The Brislows had come in for a showdown. The three of them, even young Dale, age seventeen, were heavily armed.

"Reckon I'd like to take them guns," Clint smiled when the three dismounted in front of the *White Chief Saloon*.

Ed Brislow grinned coldly. Brother Ed was the oldest and the most dangerous of the trio. He'd been in several shooting scrapes in Rimrock, and was reputed as deadly as a cobra in a gunfight.

Ed Brislow looked at sheriff Johnny Wales staring at him from behind the saloon door.

"The sheriff," Brislow grated, "ain't botherin' us an' he's the law an' order around here, Jensen."

Clint shrugged. Duke stood behind him, fingers twitching in the gun belt. Duke had stood with him in Dodge City also.

"Tom Henderson," Clint said quietly, "claims you shot at him when he came out to your place lookin' for strays." The elderly rancher had a bullet in the calf of his leg.

"The old fool," Ed Brislow rasped, "was trespassin'."

"Shootin' a man," Clint said, "is illegal. I'll take yore guns, Brislow."

ED BRISLOW stepped back a step. He was as tall as Clint, but not as solidly built. He had thin black hair, a lean hatchet face and pale blue eyes.

"You ain't takin' my gun, Jensen," big Ed snapped. He glanced at his brother and cousin. Red Brislow spat out a stream of tobacco juice. He was

short and stocky with a mop of rust-colored hair.

Young Dale, grim, white-faced, but brave, shifted his position and watched Duke Jensen. Dale Brislow because of his youth, was pitied rather than condemned in Rimrock. They'd seen him around often and he was well-liked, but he was loyal to Big Ed.

Sheriff Wales had come out of the saloon to intervene and then the sheriff had ducked back again as the guns exploded. No one knew who had fired the first shot. On the stand, at the trial, Clint testified that Ed Brislow had gone for his gun and he'd beaten him to it.

Big Ed had slumped still firing. Red Brislow tried to open up on Duke, as Clint was preoccupied. The younger Jensen had shot him through the arm then through the heart. On examination of Ed Brislow's body after the shooting, it was revealed, the elder Brislow had been killed with the first shot fired by Clint Jensen.

Young Dale had yanked out his gun as the shooting began. He ducked behind a post on the steps of the *White Chief Saloon.* His first shot had knocked Clint's hat from his head. Another slug had grazed Duke's arm.

"Stop, kid!" Clint roared but Dale flashed another shot at him kicking up dust at his feet.

Duke's gun had roared from the left side and Dale Brislow tumbled from behind the post. The three Brislows were dead and the shots were still re-echoing up and down the streets of Rimrock.

AT THE trial, Duke said he'd fired at the younger Brislow, to protect Clint, who had refused to shoot. Pop Brislow, father of the three, had brought up the murder charge against the Jensens.

Because young Dale had been popular, and he'd put up a brave fight, the town of Rimrock was divided between two factions. Sheriff Wales, glad to get rid of the Jensens, testified that he had tried to stop the shooting but that the Jensens wouldn't let him.

"You were hiding in the saloon," Clint Jensen told the sheriff at the trial. "You had no intention of arresting the Brislows, even though they had shot Tom Henderson."

"It's a lie," Johnny Wales almost screamed. "You Jensens wanted to grab all the glory before I had a chance to do anything."

Black eyes gleaming with rage, Duke Jensen tried to smash the little man with his fist.

The Jensens were acquitted but the town committee immediately took steps to release them as town marshals. They were leaving Rimrock with a black shadow over their heads. Men claimed they were too free with their guns; they shot first and asked questions later.

The Sheriff Wales faction were crowded outside the Palace Hotel as they rode up. Johnny Wales glared at them from the porch of the hotel. Clint Jensen saw the hard faces of the citizens. He'd tried his best to free Rimrock from the wave of crime which had swept through it.

The Brislows had been one family of bad men. There had been others. Many of them had left the city the day Clint Jensen signed up as town marshal. They'd heard of his reputation in Dodge. He roamed the streets of Rimrock with a six shooter on his hip and a sawed off shotgun slung beneath his coat.

The crowd watched silently as the brothers passed through. Clint glanced at the rigid face of young Duke. He saw the bitterness around the corners of the mouth. Duke was taking this seriously. He'd been disillusioned. They wanted to be law officers and they were treated like criminals after the performance of their duty.

"Let's get out," Duke said dully. "I'm fed up on this."

Clint nodded. In Dodge City, Duke had joined him as a deputy. The younger man was fearless and he'd

liked his job. He'd been enthused when Rimrock put through the call for them.

THEY PASSED the last few delapidated buildings on the outskirts of town before Duke spoke again. No plans had been made as to where they were going. When the notice was received that the town committee had met secretly and dropped them, they'd gone out to the livery stable and saddled up.

Clint usually made the plans. The older brother had been loose longer than Duke.

"Reckon you have some plans?" Duke asked finally. "We could hold up the stage or go down to the border and take up smuggling."

Clint Jensen grinned. "We're lawmen," he stated, "and if we can't work in one city we can work in another."

"Lawmen?" Duke stared at him. The younger man slapped his horse impatiently. He rode up ahead. "You can talk for yourself, Clint," he called back angrily. "I've had enough."

Clint Jensen moistened his lips. He hadn't thought Duke had gone as far as this. He knew the younger brother had been stretched to the point of snapping at the mock trial instituted by Pop Brislow. The Brislows were crooked and they'd been wiped out resisting an arrest. Grudgingly, the jury had decided upon that verdict.

Jogging along toward the west, Clint made up his mind. In the year 1880, all trails led to the barren wastelands around Big Bow. Men were scooping gray-colored clay from the hillsides and were finding themselves fabulously rich.

FROM A quiet cow town, nestling in the crock of the Big Bow creek, the settlement had mushroomed into a blaring city of three thousand rabid silver seekers. Silver was on every tongue; men found it in their food and dreamed about it in their sleep.

Duke Jensen dropped back again. "Where we going?" he asked finally.

"Big Bow," Clint said. "They'll be needin' law men from what I hear."

Duke laughed coldly. "You can speak for yourself, Clint," he snapped again.

Clint Jensen stared at the younger brother. He'd been a law man since he was eighteen and sheriff Toby Smith of Hellman made him a deputy. Wearing a silver badge had done things for the quiet boy from the range. Years later he'd succeeded Smith as sheriff. He'd gone on to Lanesville, Dodge City, Rimrock. The silver badge had never tarnished.

In Dodge, Duke had looked up Clint, and become a deputy. Now the younger man was disgusted.

"The Brislows," Clint said slowly, "ain't that important, kid."

"It's not the Brislows," Duke grumbled. "I've just had enough. I'm out to make money from now on. I'm takin' care of myself."

"Sometimes," Clint told him, "you get wrong notions, Duke. Then it takes a heap o' time to get rid of 'em."

TWO DAYS later, they rode into Big Bow. Clint's eyes opened at the rows of unpainted buildings which had sprung up overnight. He'd been in Big Bow before they hit the silver ledge and the cow town had been asleep beside the creek.

They rode down the main street at ten o'clock at night and Big Bow was just waking up. They saw the rows of wide open saloons. Drunken miners staggered down the rough board walk. Quiet, bronzed cow punchers rode through the dust. Shouts and raucous laughter flowed from the saloons.

"It's wide open," Clint Jensen grinned. "If they got any lawmen here, they musta been shot and buried a long ways back."

A gun cracked in the adjacent *Red Dog Saloon* and there was an ominous silence. Both men pulled up their horses momentarily and listened. From the interior, someone laughed hysteri-

cally. A minute later a piano tinkled and the noise broke out again.

Clint sat astride the big gray and looked up and down the dark street. He saw the big, sprawling hotel, newly painted, protruding out into the main road.

"We'll look for a room," he told Duke.

The younger brother was already dismounting at the hitching post outside the *Red Dog.*

"I'll ride up later," he said. "I'm lookin' around."

Clint shrugged as he spurred the horse away. Young Duke was old enough to take care of himself.

At the livery stable behind the hotel, he stabled the horse and then registered at the desk for a room. The young clerk's mouth opened when he read the name. Clint Jensen, gun-fighter and town marshal, was known all over the west. The clerk stared at the big gun hanging at the marshal's side.

The big man with the golden hair clamped across the floor and out onto the street. Half a dozen burly miners rolled past him and he backed against the wall to let them go. They were drunk and they were looking for trouble. Already, he had noticed signs of ill will between miners and cow punchers.

Walking down the planked walk toward the *Red Dog,* he saw the three men come from the saloon, mount their horses and ride away. Duke was one of the three. The younger brother had made friends without wasting any time. Again, Clint told himself that Duke was capable of looking out for his own interests, but it worried him. Young Duke was hot-headed and he'd been hit hard in Rimrock.

INSIDE the *Red Dog*, Clint moved quietly through the crowd. Miners blinked up at the big man with the blond hair and the rugged, tanned face. They gave him room. They saw the ivory handled Colt hanging at his side.

Clint found a place at the end of the bar and he watched the scene without emotion. He'd been in tough towns before. They didn't come any worse than Dodge or Rimrock, when he first entered.

Two miners, drunk and hanging on the bar nearby, were suggesting a toast. Clint listened carelessly. Then he took a step nearer the two befuddled men to hear more clearly.

"To the sheriff," one of the drunks grinned. "To sheriff Sam Smoley, the bravest man in Big Bow!" Both drunks roared at the joke.

"Big Mike," the other drunk chuckled, "musta run him clear across the Rockies an' back to the East."

As the bartender came up, Clint motioned to him.

"What's happened to sheriff Smoley?" he asked.

The bartender, a big bluff man with a red face and a bulbous nose, grinned at the town marshal.

"Reckon you must be a stranger in these parts," he explained, "but sheriff Smoley was run outa town yesterday by Mike Donlan, one o' Bill Wester's toughs."

Clint Jensen rubbed his hand on the smooth wood of the bar. "Who's Wester?" he asked quietly.

The bartender leaned forward. "Wester's the biggest silver operator in the west, Mister, 'an' he's tryin' to buy Big Bow—lock, stock and barrel."

"You don't buy a town," Clint pointed out.

The bartender laughed out loud. "You don't know Big Bill Wester" he grinned. "Wester's the big man from the Coast. He's tryin' to buy up or steal all the mines along the ledge. He's got most of 'em already. In another month he'll have all of 'em an' this town will be workin' fer Big Bill."

"What about Smoley?" Clint asked.

"He got in Mike Donlan's way," the bartender explained, "and Mike threatened to take him apart. Sam beat it when he found out."

"Then there's no sheriff in Big Bow?" Clint asked again.

The bartender shook his head. "You ain't aimin' to take the job, Mister?" he questioned. "It ain't worth it. Big Bill Wester runs this town and Mike Donlan with him. They don't like sheriffs."

CLINT JENSEN shrugged. He turned to survey the motley crowd. They had a fiddler and a piano player over in the corner making music. On the floor, drunken couples lurched against each other. The tables along the walls were filled with men.

"Here's Mike now," the bartender nodded toward the door.

Clint glanced toward the door. He saw a big redhead filling the doorway. Donlan had a scraggly beard which half-concealed the cruel mouth. His eyes were small and bloodshot from drink. The big miner looked as if he'd just crawled from a stable.

"He's been drinkin'," the bartender cautioned, "an' he's lookin' fer trouble. Stay away from him, Mister."

Clint smiled. "If he's lookin' for trouble," he said, "I reckon he might find it."

Mike Donlan's bloodshot eyes swept the crowd insolently. Then he lurched rudely across the dance floor and slouched up to the bar. Clint saw the miners in the room watching the bully. He saw the hatred in their eyes. Undoubtedly, these men were the miners Bill Wester had pushed out into the cold and probably Donlan had been instrumental.

Donlan saw the small miner at the end of the bar and Clint watched the bully's eyes contract. Donlan gulped down a glass of firy liquor and then staggered along the row of men.

The little man, an inoffensive man of middle age, tried to slip away before Donlan got to him.

"Wait!" the redhead roared. The piano stopped abruptly and the fiddler came to an offpitch halt. The dancers on the floor scattered as Donlan broke through them.

The big miner grasped the smaller man by the collar and sat him in a nearby seat.

"You been runnin' away," Donlan snarled. "You don't want to meet Big Bill."

The smaller man's face was pale. He was unarmed and Donlan carried a big Navy Colt at his side and a knife in a sheath.

Donlan's big hand flashed and it landed on the little miner's face. The smaller man rocked and the tears started up in his eyes. Donlan hit him again.

"I reckon that's enough," Clint Jensen said from the bar. He spoke in a low voice but it carried across the silent room.

DONLAN whirled around and glared at the stranger. He walked slowly across the floor and his big boots made the boards creak.

"You talk big, stranger," Donlan glowered. He surveyed the tall man before him. Clint was fully as tall but not as heavy as the burly redhead. Donlan's eyes shifted to the gun at Clint's side.

"What I say," Clint told him, "I figger to back up."

Donlan came a step closer. He glanced quickly around the room and he saw the expressions on the faces of the onlookers. The redhead had a reputation and he had to uphold it.

The little man in the chair started to slip away and Donlan tried to go for him. Clint Jensen caught the man by the shoulder and hauled him around. He heard the gasp of surprise from the audience. He was acting in character. As town marshal he had a duty to protect the weak against the strong.

Donlan roared as he staggered in Clint's iron grasp. The big man swung around with a bludgeoned fist and Clint stepped back. He hit Donlan squarely on the jaw with his own fist

and the redhead staggered to the floor.

Still howling with rage, Donlan went for his gun as he rolled over. Clint grinned. His own weapon flashed up into his hand. He poked a shot at Donlan and the slug embedded itself in the wood floor inches from Donlan's gun hand.

The redhead blinked and his mouth opened slowly. He looked at the hole in the flooring and he saw the smoke curling slowly from Clint's gun.

THE MAN with the golden hair grinned from the bar. He made no motion to move away. He waited for Mike Donlan's next move. The miner's face was pale and the fear was in his eyes.

"Damn!" a cowpuncher roared from the other side. "It's Clint Jensen o' Dodge City!"

Clint smiled and nodded. The men of Big Bow knew about him. They'd heard how he cleaned out Dodge City three years before.

Donlan, with the hatred still in his eyes, picked himself from the floor and shambled out of the room. He heard the laughter behind him as men raced over to shake Clint's hand. Donlan owed a debt and he wasn't the one to forget it.

The cowpuncher who had recognized Clint raced across the room. The ex-town-marshal recognized him as an old acquaintance from Dodge. They shook hands cordially.

The smaller miners crowded around the big man at the bar. Clint saw the look in their eyes and he knew what was coming.

"Since Sam Smoley left us," one of the miners growled, "we been needin' a man to work fer us agin Bill Wester. Sam was never much help nohow, but he's gone now."

Clint Jensen stared into the anxious faces. He was a law man; he'd dedicated his life to the principle. The town of Big Bow needed him badly. Evidently, Wester had it in an iron grip and was squeezing the life out of the residents. Wester was buying all the claims along the silver ledge. Those who refused to deal with the big silver operator from the coast, were subjected to the kind of treatment Mike Donlan had been issuing a few minutes before.

"We could use a town marshal in Big Bow," the cowpuncher said, "How about it Jensen?"

Clint smiled into their faces. He towered head and shoulders over most of them.

"I reckon this is a little irregular," he grinned. "You can't vote in a man as town marshal in a saloon."

"Git Mayor Hodges," one of the miners roared. "Drag him outa bed and he kin perform the ceremony."

Two of the miners raced through the door before Clint could reply. The man from Rimrock turned to the puncher at his side.

"Tell me more about Wester," he asked.

THE PUNCHER smiled wryly. "He's tough, Clint," the cowboy explained. "He came in here about three months ago and he started to buy. Old Jeff Peabody hit the silver ledge first and he staked off a big claim. Wester got Peabody stone drunk and made him sign over the claim for a tenth o' what it's worth. After he got Peabody's mine, he started to work on the other claims along the ledge."

Clint nodded. "He's hired men like Donlan to back him up?"

The puncher's leathery face crinkled. "Not only Donlan. The redhead ain't so bad. He's got Ed Towles from Dodge City, an' Ben Crowley from Galeyville."

Clint Jensen blinked. He'd heard of the deadly little gunman, Towles from Dodge City. Ed had left months before Clint took over in the tough town. Clint had heard tales of Ed Towles, killer and hired gunhand.

Ben Crowley, he'd seen in Galeyville on more than one occasion, Crow-

ley wasn't as deadly as the quiet Towles, but he'd killed men and he bragged about it.

"If the miners don't want to sell," the puncher explained, "Big Bill has one of his boys pay a visit. Usually they sell and ride outa town the next day."

"Is Wester mining as yet?" Clint asked.

The puncher shook his head. "He's waitin' till he has everything he wants. Then he goes at it on a big scale. He'll bring in machinery—a stamp mill and refine his own metal."

The two miners came back into the saloon dragging with them a small, weazened man with a red nose and weak, watery eyes.

"Here he is, Mayor," one of the miners grinned. "Swear him in."

MAYOR HODGES blinked in the strong light. He put on a pair of spectacles and stared at Clint Jensen.

The big man smiled back. Hodges undoubtedly had been elected to office in the quiet days before they found the silver ledge. No one had particularly desired the office as it was not a great honor and the pay was small.

Hodges was confused at the sudden turn of events. He was still mayor of a community which had blossomed out to three thousand souls.

"Do we need a town marshal?" Mayor Hodges tried to bluster. "This is a respectable town." He cowered at the roar from the crowd around him.

Clint Jensen waited patiently as Mayor Hodges finally swore him in and pinned a silver star on his vest.

"I promise to uphold the laws of the town of Big Bow," Clint said quietly. He heard the sudden silence fill the room. The men knew he meant it.

In Dodge it had been a different setup but similar in purpose. Dodge had been a quiet town till the railroad reached it and the western ranchers began to ship cattle to the east.

Gamblers and railroad toughs had moved in on the spur. Hardened professional killers like Ed Towles had followed the cowpunchers riding in with the big herds destined for the east. They'd gradually bullied the quiet townspeople into a state of fearful submission. It was the job of a lawman to break this unlawful grip.

"Watch out for Towles," the cowpuncher warned him as the crowd again surged forward to congratulate the new town marshal.

Clint nodded. He saw the small, thin-faced man in the doorway. He saw the straight lips and the sharp nose. The man had gray, staring eyes. He walked slowly across the floor to the bar.

The new town marshal heard the murmurs.

"That's Ed now," the cowpuncher whispered.

CLINT JENSEN studied the back of the little man at the bar. He'd seen professional killers before and he knew how dangerous they could be. Towles was a man without emotion. He'd kill at the slightest provocation and he'd kill without thinking.

Quietly, Clint walked up to the gunman. Towles heard the footsteps behind him but he didn't turn around. He sipped his drink carelessly.

Clint reached down and flipped the gun from Towles' holster. It was a black-butted .44.

Towles turned around slowly and Clint looked down into the small mouth of a derringer half-hidden in the gunman's hand.

"I'll take it back," Towles grinned coldly.

Clint smiled also. "It's a nice gun," he said, looking down at the weapon in his hand.

"Reckon it ain't nuthin' to play with," Towles told him, "It's liable to go off."

"I've seen 'em," Clint said. "I've seen 'em shoot many times." He handed the gun back to the little gunman.

He had found out how dangerous Towles could be. It had seemed strange that a killer should let another man get behind him. Usually, they were careful about such matters.

Ed Towles slipped the derringer back inside his coat. He nodded his thanks and turned back to the drink on the bar.

"I've been thinkin'," Clint told him, "of prohibiting the carrying of guns in Big Bow." In Dodge City he had at last put through the order. Cowpunchers, trail herders, riding in had been ordered to check in their hardware.

Towles shrugged. "It might be a good law," the gunman said without turning around. "I reckon there's been too many killins' in Big Bow."

The crowd had watched breathlessly as the two men confronted each other. They had heard of Clint Jensen, and they knew Ed Towles. The killer had been in a few shooting scrapes already.

They breathed easier as Clint strolled away. With a broad grin still on his face, he strode down the dark street. It would take a little time to convince Duke, but the younger brother would come around. He had been disappointed in Rimrock, but the prospects of a dangerous job in Big Bow would take Duke's mind from it.

HE WAS going up the stairs to his room when he saw the big, bulky man coming down. There was a light on the stairway but it was small and dim. Clint could scarcely see the big man's face but he made out the massive chin. He saw the cigar glowing dimly between the man's lips.

Politely, Clint backed against the wall to permit the guest to pass by. The light reflected on the silver badge still pinned on his chest. The glint of silver caught the big man's eye. He stopped and stared at the little star.

Clint Jensen heard the low laugh and he tightened up. The big man was dressed in an eastern tweed suit and he was hatless.

THEY STOOD on the stairway, the big man staring down at him and Clint looking up.

"Lawman?" the big guest asked. He had a rumbling voice and he spoke around the cigar.

"Marshal," Clint said quietly.

"You wouldn't be Clint Jensen," the big man asked then. "I just spoke to your brother. I came over to see you more than he."

Clint waited. He knew there was more coming.

"You still wear a badge," the stranger rumbled, "even though you were kicked out of Rimrock."

"We walked out of Rimrock," Clint said politely. He was beginning to realize who the big man was and he didn't like him.

"Right now," the big man pointed out, "I'm in a hurry. We could talk tomorrow morning. Drop into the office. The name's Wester."

Clint grinned. "Reckon I got a job, Mr. Wester," he said softly. Big Bill had heard of his being dropped from the town marshal job at Rimrock. Wester wanted him to work on his side.

A sudden thought struck the lawman. "You spoke to my brother?" he asked harshly.

Bill Wester nodded. "He's a smart boy. He stays with the winning side."

Hastily, Clint brushed past the man on the stairs. He broke into the room he'd hired earlier in the evening. Young Duke was yanking off his boots. Clint saw the opened bottle on the table and the half-burned cigarets.

Duke looked up and grinned. He saw the star on Clint's vest and the grin froze on his face.

Clint laughed bitterly. "Reckon we're on different sides o' the fence, Duke," he snapped. "What did Wester say?"

Duke Jensen bit his lips. He stood up in his stocking feet and waited.

"He was here," Clint snapped. "What did he have to say?"

"I'm working for Wester," Duke

said finally. His eyes were still riveted on the star. "What about that, Clint?" he pointed.

The older brother sat down on the bed. "I was just sworn in as town marshal of Big Bow," he said bitterly. "You mighta waited, Duke."

The younger man's eyes flashed as he regained control of himself.

"Reckon you're playin' the fool again, Clint," he scowled. "Didn't you get enough in Rimrock?"

Clint Jensen leaned forward, head in hands. "What do you do for Wester?" he asked finally.

"Bodyguard," Duke said. "He expects a bullet in the back any minute and he feels he must have protection."

"You know who works for him?" Clint asked. "You remember Ed Towles and Ben Crowley?"

Duke smiled. "I met them," he explained.

Clint shook his head. "The law is one thing," he snapped. "Buckin' it is another. Wester's outside the law. He's tryin' to steal this town and force all the honest miners out of it."

"The Brislows," Duke said quietly, "were workin' about the same way. We stopped 'em, Clint. What happened to us?"

Clint shrugged. "I reckon it don't pay to become discouraged in our business."

"It's your business from now on, Clint," Duke said. "I'm workin' for myself. Bill Wester is payin' big money to have me trail around with him."

Minutes later, Clint Jensen turned out the light. He lay in the darkness and he listened to Duke breathing across the room. The thing had hit him in a weak spot. He'd always thought of Duke riding with him. Now the younger brother was with the enemy and Bill Wester was powerful in Big Bow.

IN THE MORNING Duke was already gone when Clint crawled out of bed in the dim light. He heard the stage rattling up the silent street. It pulled up outside the hotel and Clint stepped to the window. He wondered where Duke had gone.

Two passengers were alighting from the dust-covered stage. One was a typical drummer with bowled hat and checkered suit. The other was a young girl. Clint Jensen stared. Then he jumped back from the window as the girl glanced up at the hotel.

He caught a glimpse of a small oval face and serious blue eyes. He saw the firm little chin and the straight nose. There were few women in Big Bow and the advent of a young and a pretty girl was an eye-opener.

Dressing hurriedly Clint stamped down the stairs. The girl was still at the hotel desk talking to the befuddled clerk. Clint heard her voice as he went by. It had a musical quality and he caught his breath.

Evidently, she was looking for someone and asking questions concerning him. Clint had met a number of the miners and punchers in the *Red Dog* saloon after they had sworn him in as town marshal. There had been many names and he'd forgotten most of them.

He did remember the little bewhiskered man with the bright blue eyes and crinkly, brown face. He'd caught the name John Anderson as he shook the little miner's hand.

The girl at the desk was asking about John Anderson and the clerk did not know him. Clint blew out his breath and then stepped over to the desk.

"Reckon I can help you, Miss," he offered. "I met John Anderson yesterday."

THE GIRL glanced up at him quickly. She saw the star on his vest and the big gun hanging at his side. He was wearing a black sombrero and it accentuated the gold of his hair.

"Mr. Anderson is my uncle," the girl smiled. "I'm from the east."

Clint nodded. John Anderson was one of the miners who still had a

stake out along the silver ledge. Bill Wester was after Anderson's "Whizz-Bang" mine.

"I'd be glad to look him up for you, Miss," Clint told her.

"The name," she said, "is Nancy Kline."

Clint bowed.

"You are sheriff..." she began.

"Town marshal, Clint Jensen," the big man said. "I'll be back as soon as I find Anderson." He went out walking on air. He wondered what the girl was doing in Big Bow looking for a reprobate uncle. Old Anderson was a good miner and the Whizz-Bang was one of the best staked claims on the ledge, but Anderson was a heavy drinker. Clint remembered seeing him on his last legs and it was still early in the evening.

Back at the *Red Dog* he asked the sleepy bartender about Anderson. The old man stayed in a shack behind the *Red Dog* when he wasn't up at the Whizz-Bang. Clint found him snoring on a couch.

John Anderson blinked when Clint told him about his niece. He bounced up to his feet, horror-stricken.

"Here!" the miner yelled. "In Big Bow?"

"Down at the hotel," Clint said. "Reckon you'd better mosey right down there, John."

He went out and walked down to the lunch room. He was still wondering where Duke had gone so early in the morning. He knew that eventually Duke would become disgusted with Wester's methods and he'd come back to the fold, but the younger brother was still burning up over the treatment they'd received in Rimrock. It would take time.

Later in the day, Clint wandered back to the hotel hoping for a glimpse of Nancy Kline. He saw her coming out the door, a hand on John Anderson's arm. The old man looked proud. He'd been shaved and had had a hair cut.

THE OWNER of the Whizz-Bang mine hailed the new town marshal and Clint waited for them as they came down the hotel steps. He saw the slight flush on the face of Nancy Kline.

"Meet Clint Jensen," Anderson boomed. "The toughest gun-fighter in the southwest."

Clint felt Nancy Kline's eyes drop toward the gun. He saw her nose twitch slightly and a slight coldness come into her eyes.

"We've met, uncle," the girl said.

Clint stepped back to permit them to pass.

"Miss Nancy," Anderson grinned, "come out to see her old uncle after she graduated from school in Boston."

Clint looked at the girl. "I hope you like your stay in Big Bow," he said quietly. He heard the two horses coming up behind him and he turned around.

Duke Jensen was riding the black gelding. The other man, a short, stout man with beady black eyes and perpetual grin on his face, sat lazily astride a small chestnut.

Clint's lips tightened as he looked at the fat man on the little horse.

"Howdee, Ben," he said softly. "We meet again." He glanced at Duke, and the younger brother's face flushed. John Anderson had his niece by the arm and was attempting to move away when Ben Crowley's cheery voice stopped him.

"What's the hurry, John?" the gunman grinned.

"Ain't no hurry," the old miner snapped. "I got business to attend to."

"Bill Wester," Crowley explained, "would like to see you, John."

The miner's face paled and his hand shook. "Damn him!" he whispered vehemently. The girl stared at him.

Clint Jensen looked up at his brother. "What's it about, Duke?" he asked.

Duke stared at the ground uncomfortably. "How do I know?" he asked. "Wester wants to talk with him. That's all there is to it."

"You kin tell Wester," the old miner barked, "that I ain't sellin' my claim an' he can't make me."

BEN CROWLEY grinned again. "That'll cause trouble, John," he said, "Why make trouble?"

Clint stepped forward. "Reckon you better tell Wester that he's through giving orders in this town, Crowley."

Crowley laughed. "That badge," he smiled. "It makes a man brave." The stout little gunman's eyes were brighter though as he looked down at the town marshal.

Clint knew the man was wondering just how much chance he had if one of them began to fire. Crowley was the cautious type, unlike Ed Towles. Towles had no nerves. When the time came to draw his gun, he did it without fanfare or consideration.

Duke was biting his lips. "Let's go, Ben," he said slowly.

Ben Crowley shrugged as he pulled the chestnut around. John Anderson and the girl were already walking hurriedly up the board walk. Clint glanced after them and then looked at Duke again.

"Ride easy," Clint told the younger brother. Duke didn't say anything and Clint watched the two as they went up the street. Already, the big bullwhacker's carts were rolling past pulled by long-eared mules.

Clint Jensen stood on the hotel steps and watched the procession. Bill Wester wasn't wasting any time. He'd already started work on miner, John Anderson. As the old man had an excellent stake on the ledge, Wester intended to buy him out, or force him out. If Anderson had a good location, Wester wouldn't have money to pay him the value of the mine but Wester would take it anyway.

CLINT REMEMBERED that Bill Wester had asked him to drop into the office that morning. On a sudden impulse he went down the steps again and walked along the street. The offices of the "Silver Mountain Mine" were located in a rickety building off the main street. Already, Wester was putting up a new structure to house his company.

The silver man was sitting behind a big folding desk when Clint walked in. He saw the shade on the mine operator's massive face. For the first time he got a good look at Bill Wester.

The man's eyes were gray and small. He sat behind the desk with the cigar clamped between rigid jaws. He glanced at the silver star contemptuously.

"I thought you were smart," Wester snapped. "I just heard about this business."

Clint grinned at him. "I figger I know my business," he said quietly.

"You could drop that thing in the waste basket," Wester said, "and work for me. We're developing this town, Jensen. You ought to get in now while there's still a chance."

"Suppose the people of Big Bow object to your developing them?" Clint asked. "Maybe they won't like it."

"They can move." Wester grinned. "It's a big country." He glanced at the town marshal curiously. "What do you intend to do," he asked, "stop me?"

Clint nodded.

Wester laughed out loud. "One move from you, Jensen," he smiled, "and I'll make your office illegal. I'll bring in lawyers to contest your right to such a position."

Clint shrugged. "You'll have to act fast, Mr. Wester," he drawled.

"Buck me," the silver man warned, "and I will—like a rattler!"

THE TOWN MARSHAL walked slowly back up the street. He recognized Wester's power. The big man was firmly intrenched in Big Bow. He had money; he had a half dozen gunmen at his beck and call. He, Clint Jensen, was working alone.

It was true that he had the decent miners with him but they wouldn't be of much help if Ed Towles, Crowley,

and Donlan went to work on them. He saw the red-headed miner crossing the street and Donlan glared at him. He knew if Donlan ever got the chance he would not hesitate to put a slug in the marshal's back.

At the hotel, hours later, he met Nancy Kline. The girl evidently had been waiting for him. She motioned as he came up the steps to the porch. John Anderson was nowhere in sight.

"Mr. Jensen," the girl began, "I'm worried about Uncle John."

Clint nodded. He was wondering whether he ought to tell her the truth.

"The short man came around again and told John he had to see Mr. Wester." Nancy's blue eyes were troubled. "Why are they trying to force Uncle to see this Mr. Wester?"

"What did your Uncle say?" Clint asked.

The girl reddened. "He swears he won't do it," she said.

Clint grinned. He could imagine how John Anderson had told Ben Crowley the second time. The explosive little miner didn't curb his language when his temper was aroused.

Distinctly, they heard the shot in the saloon down the street. Clint leaped down the steps and took it on the run. He yanked the .45 from the holster. The shot had come from the *Red Dog*.

Men stepped aside to let him go. His hat flew off as he crossed the street and his yellow hair bounced as he ran. He smashed through the batwing doors and almost ran into Ed Towles coming out.

Towles' gun was in his hand and smoke was coming out of the muzzle. John Anderson lay on the floor at the other end of the bar. The old miner was clutching his shirt which was staining red.

CLINT JENSEN stared for a brief instant into Ed Towles' cold eyes. As Towles swung his gun around to meet the new enemy, Clint raised the .45 and brought the barrel down on the gunman's head.

Towles staggered forward and Clint caught him by the shoulders. The gunman sagged to the floor and Clint let him drop. He walked over to John Anderson as the crowd came out of hiding.

Ripping open the old man's shirt he saw the wound just below Anderson's shoulder. It was not fatal and the old man was conscious. Clint heard him swearing softly. There was a gun in Anderson's hand. Evidently, Towles had goaded him into drawing a weapon and then tried to dispose of him. The gunman no doubt had his orders from Wester. Anderson was recalcitrant.

"Get a doctor," Clint snapped to one of the girls. He felt the other girl at his elbow and he turned impatiently. He stared up into Nancy Kline's horror-filled eyes.

"It's all right," Clint told her. "Reckon he'll pull through. These miners are tough hombres."

Immediately, the eastern girl regained control of herself. She was bathing the wound skillfully when the doctor came back. Anderson was removed to the hotel and Clint went back to the stunned Ed Towles.

Unceremoniously, he lifted the gunman to his shoulder and strode down the street with him. He opened the door to the jail house and deposited Towles into one of the cells.

A trickle of blood rolled down Towles' face. The gunman blinked through the bars at the big town marshal. Remembrance flooded back and Towles staggered to his feet. He felt at his side for the gun and then flicked a hand inside his shirt for the derringer.

Clint Jensen grinned at him. "Reckon I got both of 'em, Ed," he explained. "Better take it easy for awhile."

"I don't stay here," Towles panted.

Clint went back to the hotel and he found John Anderson much improved.

"He was after me to go and see

Wester," the miner snapped. "He got me so mad, I pulled a gun on him."

Nancy Kline was listening. She stepped up and Clint saw her face.

"I think" she said quietly, "you should tell me what it's all about."

Clint nodded. He told her the story and John Anderson shook his head emphatically.

"The Whizz-Bang," the miner growled, "is the best claim on the ledge. I been takin' enough outa there already to pay my way."

DOWNSTAIRS, Clint met Duke waiting for him. The younger brother was uncomfortable.

"It's a nice business," Clint snapped. "Shooting up a man like Anderson."

"He's an old fool," Duke said. "He won't listen to reason. Wester's willing to buy his mine."

"A man doesn't *have* to sell," Clint pointed out.

"What about Towles?" Duke asked. "You can't hold him, Clint."

"Why?" the older brother asked flatly.

"Wester's already hired lawyer Bunstan," Duke explained. "They'll have Towles out."

Clint nodded grimly. "There'll be a trial first," he snapped.

Duke waved him away. "No one will testify against Towles and you know it. Bunstan will prove it was a case of self-defence."

"I can try," Clint said. He sat in the little court house a week later and listened to the thin, bespectacled Bunstan state his case. Ed Towles sat nearby, his face cold as ice.

Clint Jensen glanced at the jury and he knew his case was lost. The jury had been had picked. Witnesses had been introduced who swore that Anderson picked the fight.

"If there is any case here," Bunstan grinned, "it should be against John Anderson for deliberately opening fire on my client."

"Anderson," Clint spoke up, "never

[*Turn Page*]

A Tempestuous, Thrilling Novelette

YESTERDAY'S LOVE
by Doris Knight

leads off the big July issue of

IDEAL LOVE STORIES

Now on sale at all stands

had a chance to use his gun. There were no bullets fired from it."

Bunstan laughed it off. "The intention was present," he stated blandly.

HELPLESS, Judge Adams released Ed Towles from all charges. The spectators streamed from the building grumbling. Towles walked up to Clint Jensen.

"I reckon you have my guns," Towles said. "I'll take 'em, Marshal. I figger I'll be needin' 'em right soon."

"Any time," Clint said coldly. "You know where I'll be." He went past the *Red Dog* saloon and he saw the crowds of discontented miners lounging around the place. These men were trying to fight Bill Wester but they didn't have a chance. Wester had hired gun men on his pay roll and he was willing to back up his claims with cold lead.

"You hadn't oughta take prisoners, Marshal," one of the miners called after him. "It don't pay."

Clint Jensen stared straight ahead of him. He didn't like to shoot men in cold blood if it could be avoided. But he knew now it was useless to try to bring Wester's men to trial for any offence. Wester would hire witnesses and bribe a jury. He'd have the only lawyer in Big Bow on his side and he could import better lawyers if need be.

HE MET Nancy Kline back at the hotel. She had been sitting through the trial and she had realized how hopeless it was. They went up to the room where John Anderson was recuperating. Anderson had a companion—a grizzled old miner from the hills.

The uncle's face was red with rage. He roared when Clint came into the room.

"They're jumpin' my claim," Anderson howled, "an' I can't get up to fight 'em off."

Clint stared. "Who?" he asked. He looked at the little miner sitting by the bedside.

"Joe," Anderson cried, "says half a dozen o' Wester's men are at my claim. They're chasin' away anybody comes near."

The town marshal's jaw tightened. Claim-jumping was a serious offence in Big Bow. Even Bill Wester would have a hard time proving Anderson's claim was false. The old man had had it recorded the second day of the strike, weeks before Wester arrived on the scene.

Clint went downstairs and around to the livery stable. He saddled the gray and rode hastily up the mountain. He knew the general location of Anderson's Whizz-Bang mine and he had no difficulty finding it. The claim had been staked about two miles outside of Big Bow.

Ben Crowley, Ed Towles and Mike Donlan were seated before the opening of the shaft. Crowley had a sawed-off shot-gun across his lap. Towles was fingering a six shooter.

Clint Jensen saw Duke coming up out of the mine. Again the younger brother bore the embarrassed expression on his face.

"Howdee, Jensen," Crowley greeted.

"Reckon you boys are on the wrong claim," Clint snapped. "This belongs to John Anderson."

"Look up the claim," Donlan snarled. "The old man never entered anything on the books."

"We work for Wester," Ed Towles said quietly. "He says to stay here so we stay." The gunman looked down the barrel of the deadly weapon in his hands. Clint Jensen knew Towles was anxious to try that gun on the town marshal.

"Better get back, Clint," Duke said. "There's too many guns for you."

"Sure," Clint nodded. "It wasn't always that way." He knew if he had Duke on his side the odds would be nearly even. Duke was looking on the ground. "I'm goin' back," Clint told

them, "but I'm sayin' you boys bit off a big chunk this time."

He rode down the main street of Big Bow and he heard the noise. The old miner had spread the news that Bill Wester's blunch had jumped Joe Anderson's claim.

CLINT STOPPED at the office of the Silver Mountain Mine. He found Big Bill Wester waiting for him.

"Don't be a fool," Wester said angrily. "You don't have a chance, Marshal. There's no entry in the claim book that Anderson ever recorded anything. We found the mine and we took it. If Anderson wants to fight, tell him to get a lawyer."

Clint stood before the big silver operator, his hands linked in the big gunbelt around his waist. He knew Bill Wester had bribed the agent into destroying Anderson's claim record. With a good lawyer on his side, Wester couldn't lose inasmuch as he already had possession of the mine and possession was nine-tenths of the law.

"This town's stirred up," Clint told the man. "You'd better be careful, Wester."

Wester grinned. "Do I look like a fool?" he asked. "I have a dozen hired riders on the way from Indian Creek. They'll help out Towles, Crowley and your brother."

Clint stared at the massive man before him. "You'll start a town war," he asked, "just to get control of the mines?"

Wester smiled. He stood up and blew out cigar smoke. "There's a few million dollars worth of silver in that ledge, Marshal, and I'm aiming to get it—all of it—. I'd raise hell itself for that much money!"

"There'll be men killed," Clint said, "if you rile up these miners too much."

Wester nodded. "I'll risk it," he said complacently.

Going down the street again, Clint saw the crowds around the *Red Dog*. The shooting of John Anderson had not stirred them up so much as the claim jumping. Already, it was known that Wester claimed Anderson hadn't recorded his claim on the mountain. If Wester disputed Anderson's sound title, he'd go after the other miners the same way. No man's claim was safe if it was possible to have the records changed.

THREE OF the miners stopped Clint as he was going past.

"Somethin' has to be done, Marshal," they said. "We ain't lettin' Wester take away our livin'."

Clint nodded. He thought of the gunmen waiting up at the Whizz-Bang mine. Wester had half dozen other fighters coming over to help out. If the miners attempted to retake the mine, many of them would be shot and Wester would claim to be in the right. He was legally guarding his own property which he'd be able to prove by law.

"We'll work it out," Clint told them.

[Turn Page]

A Thrilling Romance

TOO EAGER FOR LOVE

leads off the new, digest size

June issue of

TODAY'S LOVE STORIES

Now on sale at all stands

"Don't be too hasty to swallow lead. Wester has a number of gunmen up there."

"One of 'em," a miner grumbled, "is yore brother, Marshal."

Clint Jensen grimaced. He walked down the street and he remembered that he was fighting it alone this time. He'd always depended on Duke's gun to cover him in the tight spots.

He went back to the hotel again and he tried to figure a way out. Wester had all avenues blocked. In Big Bow, he ruled with an iron hand. It it were possible to get him over to the capitol at Tucson and have him tried with honest witnesses, they might be able to get a conviction. Wester was deliberately stealing all the mines on the mountain but no one was able to bring a charge against him.

He saw Nancy Kline coming out of her uncle's room and she came over to him. He read the sympathy in her face and it cheered him.

"I realize what you are up against, Mr. Jensen," she said, "and I wish I could help. I had a different opinion of lawmen and gun-fighters."

"Some men," Clint grated, "understand only one law. That's the law of the gun."

AFTER THE evening meal, he went out into the street again and he saw the groups of armed men congregating around the *Red Dog* Saloon. The worst had happened. The angry miners weren't going to wait for the town marshal to act. They were going up to the Whizz Bang on their own initiative and have it out with the claim jumpers.

[*Turn To Page* 84]

READING GLASSES
FOR PEOPLE OVER 40
SEE FINE PRINT
LARGE & CLEAR
GET THE FINEST PLANO-CONVEX LENSES AND SAVE UP TO $12 OR MORE

You will bless the day you read this ad. No longer need you strain or squint to read small type or use an old fashioned hand magnifying glass. CLEARVISION MAGNIFYING SPECTACLES are perfect for those who need simple magnifying lenses and do not have astigmatism or eye disease. Now you can read fine Bible print, find telephone numbers, do fancy needle work and fine machine work with ease and comfort.

FEATURES
- Finest Plano-Convex lenses
- Precision ground and polished
- Latest style frames
- Attractive, durable shock resistant

NEVER BEFORE AN OFFER LIKE THIS

CLEARVISION READING GLASSES use lenses which are ground and polished to the highest standards of precision. You could pay up to $18 for glasses and not get greater usefulness and satisfaction. They are set in attractive, modern, shock-resistant optical frames designed for years of service.

30 DAY FREE TRIAL NO EXPENSIVE EXAMINATION NEEDED

SEND NO MONEY. Just send name, age and sex. We will rush your Clearvision glasses to you C.O.D. Pay postman $3.95 plus a few cents C.O.D. postage on delivery or send $3.95 and save C.O.D. charge. FULL MONEY BACK GUARANTEE. If not completely satisfied return glasses within 30 days for prompt refund of full purchase price.

NULIFE PRODUCTS DEPT PE-78 COS COB , CONN

NEW DISCOVERY IN HYPNOTISM

shows how to hypnotize in 30 seconds!

Yes, an amazing new method has been developed to bring on quick, easy induction of the hypnotic trance. Now, for the first time, you too can benefit from this recent discovery in hypnotic induction.

QUICK RESULTS

Want to hypnotize your friends? Your club members? HOW TO HYPNOTIZE is a remarkable primer that shows you just how to master the latest improved induction methods. The author, a widely experienced hypnotist and consultant, gives you the exact positions to take, the precise phraseology, all the steps necessary to hypnotize even the most difficult subjects.

EXCLUSIVELY in How to HYPNOTIZE

ENTIRELY NEW METHOD

Until recently the process of hypnotic induction was largely based on trial and error methods which succeeded mainly with subjects who were highly susceptible to hypnosis in the first place. The truth is that these highly susceptible subjects make up a very small percentage of the population. That is why amateurs and beginning hypnotists have so often been disappointed in their attempts at trance induction. Now, however, recent scientific research has developed ENTIRELY NEW METHODS that are not only sure fire in their results but quick and easy to achieve! For the first time, these new methods are presented in HOW TO HYPNOTIZE in language that you can easily and successfully follow on the very first reading!

SHOWS YOU STEP BY STEP

This book — which has been acclaimed by doctors and psychologists — is guaranteed to give you all the know-how necessary to induce the trance state in others. It not only explains the latest discoveries in hypnotic induction, but it shows step by step, move by move, exactly how to bring on the trance; how to transform the trance into deeper and still deeper states; and how to terminate the trance quickly and effectively without any dangers whatsoever. You are even given alternative methods, so that you can actually chose the one that suits you best.

Photographically Illustrated

40 photographic illustrations show how you can achieve trance induction in as little as 30 seconds!

USED BY DOCTORS

The book that is being used by doctors and psychologists to learn hypnotic induction is now available to you

FOR ONLY $1.98

FREE 10-DAY OFFER

FREE 10-day examination of this book is offered to you if you mail us coupon today. If not delighted with results return it within 10 days for a full refund of the purchase price.

FREE 10-DAY OFFER
Mail Coupon Today

GUARANTEE

This guarantees you that HOW TO HYPNOTIZE will show you how to induce the trance or your purchase price will be refunded upon return of the book.

Signed, BOND BOOK

Bond Book Co., Dept. H-761
43 W. 61st Street, New York 23, N.Y.

Send How to Hypnotize for 10 day Free trial. My purchase price will be promptly refunded if I'm not satisfied

☐ Send C.O.D. I'll pay postman $1.98 plus postage.
☐ I enclose $1.98. Bond Book pays postage.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ ZONE _____ STATE _____

Clint Jensen quickened his footsteps. He was passing a dark alley when he saw the skulking form in the shadows. He saw the gleam of metal and instinctively he went for his gun.

Another gun roared from the alley. There was a blinding flash of light and the gun powder seared his face. He felt himself going down and he felt sick inside of him. He had been unable to identify the man who had tried to shoot him from ambush.

He lay on the ground and he heard running footsteps and the cries of men. He knew they were picking him up and he felt the blood running down his face. He felt numb from the shock of the thing and he wasn't sure where he'd been hit.

After awhile a doctor was working on him and he made out the anxious faces hovering above him. He saw Nancy Kline's pale face in the crowd. They had carried him back to the hotel and he was on his own bed.

The doctor, a slender, young-looking man with a long neck, was grinning down on him. They were wiping the blood from his face.

"It looks worse than it is, Marshal," the doctor said finally. "It's only a scalp wound. You'll be as good as new tomorrow. But another inch and I wouldn't be talking to you."

"Who was it?" a grizzled miner wanted to know. The room was still full of people. Clint Jenson looked at

[*Turn To Page* 86]

PERSONALIZED HOME BAR

ONLY **$5.98**

Personally Initialled
It's Portable
For Parties, Gatherings
Basement

This handsome portable Home Bar, personalized with your initials in a striking 3-dimensional contrast, makes it easy to serve guests in style. Made for both indoor and outdoor use. Its handsome contrast of wood grain and gold finish makes for a sparkling setting in the home. Adds class to any party or gathering, and points up the cleverness of its proud owner. And, for relaxing at home, in the parlor, den or basement it's certainly a convenient, handsome addition. Only $5.98. Comparable in satisfaction and utility to bars selling for $30. A perfect gift for any occasion.

10 DAY FREE TRIAL

Order today! If not delighted return for refund. Because of its large size we are forced to ask for 63¢ shipping charges.

FEATURES

- Personalized With Your Initials
- It's Portable—Sets Up Indoors Or Out
- Built-in Shelf Holds Full Party Supplies
- Stain Resistant Bar Top

It's Big—39" wide, 38" high, 13" deep

Sturdily built of aluminum laminated and wood grain finished Multi Flute Fibreboard, this handsome personalized Home Bar is resistant to alcohol and soda stains. Handy built-in shelf holds full supply of bottles, glasses and napkins. Full size bar top holds drinks, pretzels, chips, etc. Sets up in a jiffy and folds compact for easy storage. A beauty for your home, and a novel gift. State initials desired with each order.

MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

S. J. Wegman Co., Dept. BR-24
LYNBROOK, NEW YORK

Rush my new personalized portable Home Bar at once. If I am not delighted I may return it after ten days Free Trial for prompt refund of full purchase price.

☐ Send C.O.D. I will pay postman on delivery plus C.O.D. shipping charges.

☐ I enclose $5.98 plus shipping charges.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

MY INITIALS ARE .....

RESTORE YOUR CAR PERFORMANCE

CAR LOST IT'S PEP? BURNING OIL?

Amazing New Method Lets You Restore Car Performance In a Few Minutes. No Mechanic Needed—You Pay Nothing For Gadgets or Mechanical Repairs.

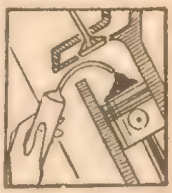
Cars over 3 years old that have gone over 25-30,000 miles are not what they used to be. Your car probably uses too much oil, lacks power, is hard to start, is slow on the pickup, uses too much gasoline. You've probably guessed the reason. The pistons just don't fit the cylinders like they used to—Friction has worn the cylinder walls and pistons so that the rings can no longer fully seal. You are losing compression and power each time a cylinder fires. Gas is leaking into the crankcase oil to undermine its lubricating powers, oil is passing up into the cylinders to be burned into performance killing carbon deposits.

Regularly $4.45 only 2.98 Regular Size

SAVE UP TO $150

Now, if this is the situation you are in for an overhaul job costing somewhere between $50 and $150 UNLESS— Yes, there is an alternative. You can fix that leaky engine in a few minutes, without buying a single part or gadget, and at a cost so low you'll hardly notice it. You just squeeze a little PEPGO Ring Seal into each cylinder through the spark plug openings, replace the plugs and idle the engine and you are finished.

PEPGO coats the cylinder walls and pistons with a unique mineral suspension which has this truly amazing power. When subjected to the high heat of the engine this mineral expands up to 30 times its original volume to fill those gaps between the rings and cylinder walls with a pliable resilient and lubricating seal that holds compression, stops oil pumping, and gas blowing. Gone is piston slapping, engine knocks. Compression is restored and with it comes more pep and power, easier starting, better mileage and lower oil consumption.



WORN OUT ENGINES RUN LIKE NEW

TEST #1

A 1945 "Dodge" 6 cylinder truck had been driven over 100,000 miles without overhaul and was using over a quart of oil every 100 miles. Rated compression of engine when new was 110 lbs. After one PEPGO RING SEAL treatment average cylinder compression now was raised over 40% from 76 to 107 lbs. Oil consumption was greatly reduced and gasoline mileage increased.

Compression Readings—1945 Dodge Truck

	Cylinder 1	Cylinder 2	Cylinder 3	Cylinder 4	Cylinder 5	Cylinder 6
Before	87 lbs.	75 lbs.	75 lbs.	60 lbs.	75 lbs.	85 lbs.
After	100 lbs.	110 lbs.	115 lbs.	95 lbs.	105 lbs.	118 lbs.

TEST #2

Engine Compression Completely Restored In 1948 Pontiac

A 1948 Pontiac "8" had been driven over 77,000 miles without overhaul and was consuming a quart of oil every 200 to 300 miles. Rated compression for this engine when new was 120 lbs. After one PEPGO RING SEAL Treatment average cylinder compression was increased from 107 lbs. to 120 lbs or equal to factory standards when new. The car now exhibited exceptional pep and pickup on mountains. Oil consumption was more than cut in half. Gasoline mileage was increased more than 20%.

Compression Readings—1948 Pontiac

	Cyl. 1	Cyl. 2	Cyl. 3	Cyl. 4	Cyl. 5	Cyl. 6	Cyl. 7	Cyl. 8
Before	105 lbs	95 lbs	107 lbs	120 lbs	110 lbs	115 lbs	95 lbs	123 lbs
After	125 lbs	120 lbs	120 lbs	125 lbs	122 lbs	120 lbs	115 lbs	116 lbs

NOW ONLY 2.98

This is the testimony of the experts. Now read what just one of the many, many satisfied users have said.

"PEPGO RING SEAL WORTH MANY TIMES THE PRICE."

"I cannot tell you how pleased I am with the results Pepgo Ring Seal has given in my 1947 Cadillac. Previous to treatment my car used one quart of oil every 250 miles. Now the car uses less than a quart of oil every thousand miles. I have also noticed a real increase in power and gas mileage since the treatment. I have now driven over 3000 miles since the Pepgo Ring Seal application and continue to get the same good results. Apart from the savings in oil and gas I found Pepgo Ring Seal worth many times the price because it restored the original power of my car. Please send me two new tubes of Pepgo Ring Seal for use in my 1950 Oldsmobile." C.S.R., Chestnut Hill, Pa.

GET UP TO 50% MORE POWER

No labor cost—nothing else to buy

30 DAY FREE TRIAL—SEND NO MONEY

You risk nothing. Just fill in the coupon below and we will rush your PEPGO RING SEAL kit together with full instructions anyone can easily follow by return mail. Just a few easy, pleasurable minutes later your car will begin to operate in a manner that will truly amaze you. Run your car after the PEPGO treatment for a full 30 days. If you are not completely delighted with the results, if your car doesn't run quieter, smoother, with more pep and pickup, less oil and gas consumption then just return the empty tubes for prompt refund of the full purchase price. We stand behind the product. We guarantee—fully satisfactory results, or your money back. 6 cylinder cars require one tube—only $2.98, 8 cylinder cars 2 tubes—only $4.98. This is a special offer. PEPGO sold before for $4.45 per tube. So rush coupon today.

YOU RISK NOTHING

Just prove it for yourself at our risk. PEPGO Ring Seal is guaranteed. It cannot harm the finest car in any way. It can only improve and protect your motor. (Of course it will not correct mechanically defective parts.) Try PEPGO Ring Seal in your engine for a full 30 days. If you are not satisfied that everything we have led you to expect is absolutely true—just return the empty tube and we will refund the full purchase price.

NULIFE CHEMICAL PRODUCTS, Dept. R-2
P. O. Box 433, Great Neck, N. Y.

Rush ..... tubes of Pepgo Ring Seal together with kit and easy instructions.

☐ 6 Cylinder cars (1 tube) $2.98 ☐ 8 Cylinder car (2 tubes) $4.98

☐ Send C.O.D. I will pay postman on delivery plus a few cents postage. If I do not see immediate improvement, if after even 30 days' use I am not completely satisfied that I have gotten improved Pep, pickup, performance and economy for my car, I may return the empty tubes for prompt refund of the full purchase price.

☐ I enclose payment. Modern Mart will pay postage. Same Money Back Guarantee.

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... State .....

PELLET FIRING "45" CAL. AUTOMATIC Magazine Loading Ammunition Clip — Has Automatic Slide Action — Over 15 Moving Parts

$1.00

Fires 8 Rounds

An automatic full size model of a high powered "45" caliber automatic pistol that looks and feels just like the real thing and contains over 15 moving parts. Loads 8 complete rounds in the magazine clip which snaps into the hard butt just like an army "45". Then fires 8 bullet-like pellets as fast as you can pull the trigger. You've got to see the automatic slide action and feel the power to believe it! Great for shooting fun. This is the most authentic model gun we've ever seen.

Learn the Working Mechanism of a "45"

This accurate model of a high-powered, "45" comes to you disassembled with all the working parts of a "45". It assembles in a jiffy and full instructions are included so that in no time at all, you'll learn working parts of an automatic. Comes with instructions, full supply of pellets and man-sized silhouette target.

10 Day Free Trial

Try it for 10 days free. If you are not 100% delighted simply return after 10 days for prompt refund of full purchase price. Don't delay! Order now! Simply send $1 plus 25c shipping charge to:

HONOR HOUSE PRODUCTS Dept. PP-68
Lynbrook, N. Y.

MEN PAST 40

Troubled With GETTING UP NIGHTS
Pains in Back, Hips, Legs, Tiredness

Then your troubles may be traced to Glandular Dysfunction . . . a constitutional disease. Neglect of this condition often leads to premature old age and sometimes incurable malignancy.

The Excelsior Medical Clinic has a New Free Book that tells how thousands of men have been successfully treated here at Excelsior Springs for Glandular Dysfunction by NON-SURGICAL Methods. They found soothing relief and a new outlook in the future of life.

This Free Book may prove of utmost importance in your life. Write Today. There is no obligation.

Excelsior Medical Clinic Dept. 2319, Excelsior Spgs., Mo.

ILLUSTRATED BOOKLETS

The kind YOU will enjoy. Each one of these booklets is size 3 by 4¼ and is ILLUSTRATED with 8 page cartoon ILLUSTRATIONS of COMIC CHARACTERS and is full of fun and entertainment. 20 of these booklets ALL DIFFERENT sent prepaid in plain envelope upon receipt of $1.00 No checks or C.O.D. orders accepted.

TREASURE NOVELTY CO. Dept. DA-4
182 Knickerbocker Station New York 2, N. Y.

them dazedly. He had no idea who had tried to bushwhack him. He didn't think Towles or Crowley would use such methods. He remembered Mike Donlan. The big red head hated him because he'd been shown up. Donlan wouldn't attempt to stand up against him in a gun-fight because Clint had a reputation.

"I reckon there's somebody I'll be callin' on," Clint said softly. He looked at Nancy Kline and the girl shivered involuntarily.

OLD JOE, the miner, Anderson's friend, stood at the foot of the bed. The old man's face was twisted in rage.

"They ain't gettin' away with this, Marshal," he snapped. "We already sent a man up to the Whizz-Bang to tell 'em to git. If they don't, we're goin' up."

Clint sat up on the bed after the doctor completed the bandage. His head throbbed violently but then it passed away.

"It would do you good," the doctor told him, "to stay in bed till morning. You had a bad shock."

The town marshal smiled coldly. He reached for his gun belt hanging on the bed post. He stood up and he felt the room whirling around him. Nancy Kline caught his arm and steadied him.

"Please stay in bed," she pleaded. "There's nothing anyone can do tonight."

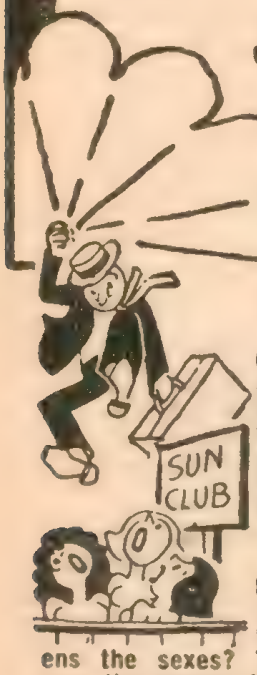
Clint Jensen blinked. In a short while a group of miners were going up to the Whizz-Bang mine with guns to drive Bill Wester's men away. There would be shooting and Duke would be involved. Innocent men would be killed.

The town marshal turned to the old miner. "Tell the men to wait at the *Red Dog* saloon for me," he ordered. "They're not to start until I get there."

[*Turn To Page* 88]

2139 FRANK UNTAMPERED

JOKES-GAGS-CARTOONS IN THIS COMPLETE JOKE BOOK LIBRARY



THE TRAVELING SALESMAN'S JOKE BOOK

Once there was a Traveling Salesman and a Farmer's Daughter—but wait—for the whole story and hundreds of other jokes and cartoons, get THE COMPLETE TRAVELING SALESMAN'S JOKE BOOK.

BARTENDER'S JOKE BOOK

Plenty of cheers in the BARTENDER'S JOKE BOOK. What happens when liquor unloosens the sexes? The answer is plastered all over the pages of this wild book.

THE COMPLETE ARMY-NAVY JOKE BOOK

A general is just as likely to find himself the butt of a joke as a private in this merry collection of jokes, gags and funny anecdotes about the military services.

THE BARBERSHOP JOKE BOOK

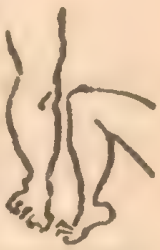
Barbershocking jokes about barbers, manicurists and their wooly customers. Will keep you in stitches.

THE BEDSIDE JOKE BOOK

What's this book like? Well take a look at just a few of the chapters in this book — "Beds of Easy Virtue," "Beds of Creation," "Strange Bed fellows," "Bed Lam," "Bed Shy," "Bed and Bored," etc.

SEXCAPADES — THE LOVE LIFE OF THE MODERN HOMO SAPIENS

An exciting unusual cartoon story of 2 lovers told with pictures new and words so bold!



PERMANENTLY BOUND FOR A LIFETIME OF PLEASURE OVER 700 PAGES

BOND BOOK CO., Dept. J 923
43 West 61st Street, New York 23, N. Y.

OK I have checked my selection. Unless 100% satisfied I can get my purchase price refunded without question.

- ☐ THE TRAVELING SALESMAN'S JOKE BOOK $1.98
- ☐ THE BARTENDER'S JOKE BOOK $1.98
- ☐ THE BEDSIDE JOKE BOOK $1.98
- ☐ THE ARMY-NAVY JOKE BOOK $1.98
- ☐ SEXCAPADES—LOVE LIFE OF THE MODERN HOMO SAPIENS $1.98
- ☐ THE BARBERSHOP JOKE BOOK $1.98
- ☐ Check here if you want the whole set. In that case price is only $9.90. You save $1.98 or get 1 book free.
- ☐ SEND COD. I'll pay postman plus postage.
- ☐ I ENCLOSE $..... BOND pays postage.

Name .....

Address .....

City..... Zone..... State.....

No COD for foreign countries. Send remittance.

To People who want to write but can't get started

Do you have that constant urge to write but fear that a beginner hasn't a chance? Then listen to what a famous editor said on this subject:

"There is more room for newcomers in the writing field today than ever before. Some of the greatest of writing men and women have passed from the scene. Who will take their places? Fame, riches and the happiness of achievement await the new men and women of power."

SELLS FIRST ARTICLE TO LOOK MAGAZINE HALF-WAY THROUGH COURSE

"I had good luck in my first attempt at writing for a national magazine. I wrote an article in answer to one that appeared in Look Magazine. The article drew an unusual reader response and mine was chosen as the best. The editor expressed interest in the fact I was studying your course and the check I received more than paid for it."—Glenn Dunlap, Painesville, Ohio.

Writing Aptitude Test — FREE!

THE Newspaper Institute of America offers a FREE Writing Aptitude Test. Its object is to discover new recruits for the army of men and women who add to their income by fiction and article writing. The Writing Aptitude Test is a simple but expert analysis of your latent ability, your powers of imagination, logic, etc. Not all applicants pass this test. Those who do are qualified to take the famous N.I.A. course based on the practical training given by big metropolitan dailies.

This is the New York Copy Desk Method which teaches you to write by writing. You develop your individual style instead of trying to copy that of others. Although you work at home, on your own time, you are constantly guided by experienced writers. You "cover" actual assignments such as metropolitan reporters get. It is really fascinating work. Each week you see new progress. In a matter of months you can acquire the coveted "professional" touch. Then you are ready for market with greatly improved chances of making sales.

Mail the Coupon NOW

But the first step is to take the FREE Writing Aptitude Test. It requires but a few minutes and costs nothing. So mail the coupon now. Make the first move towards the most enjoyable and profitable occupation—writing for publication! Newspaper Institute of America, One Park Ave., New York 16, N.Y. (Founded 1925) Licensed by State of New York. (Approved Member, National Home Study Council)

Free

Newspaper Institute of America
One Park Avenue, New York 16, N. Y.

Send me, without cost or obligation, your FREE Writing Aptitude Test and further information about writing for profit.

Mr. / Mrs. / Miss .....

Address .....

City ..... Zone ..... State .....

(All correspondence confidential. No salesman will call.)

31-D-668

Copyright 1957 Newspaper Institute of America.

Old Joe's eyes glistened. "The Brislow fight all over again, eh Marshal?"

Clint bit his lips. In the Brislow fray he had Duke on his side. Tonight, he would be fighting against Duke and it went against the grain. He wondered what would happen when Wester's gunmen pulled leather.

HURRYING around to the stable, he saddled up the gray and rode swiftly down the street. He hoped the reinforcements Wester had ordered from Indian Creek, had not arrived. If they could get possession of the mine again and hold it, then Wester would be in the wrong trying to get it back.

There was a full moon shining up on the mountain. Glancing back as he climbed, Clint saw the lights of the various saloons in Big Bow. He could hear the distant shouting. Someway, somehow, he had to stop this affair before it got started.

Halfway up the slope he saw the campfire near the Whizz-Bang mine. Dismounting quietly, he started up on foot. He moved slowly, noiselessly, and he worked out a plan of action as he went.

He had to surprise the gunmen. If they resisted, he'd have to use his gun. There'd be three or four against one. He didn't think Duke would do any fighting under the circumstances.

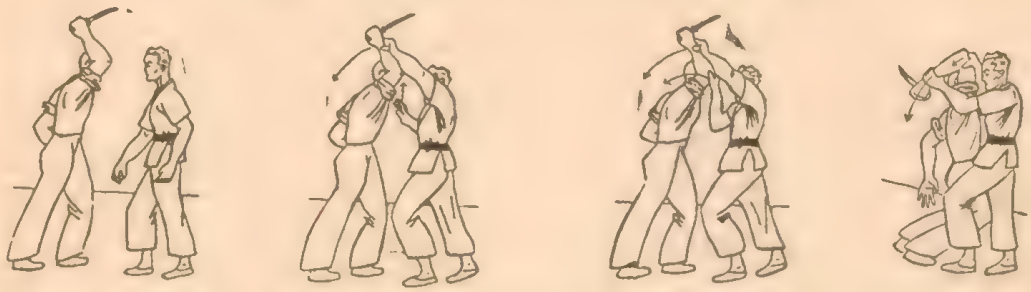
If he failed, and the hired gunhands put him down, it would be all over. The miners would storm the hill and many of them would be killed. Wester's men would hold off until the other gunfighters came from Indian Creek. Solidly entrenched then, the big silver operator would have nothing to fear. He could pick up the remainder of the claims along the silver ledge and consolidate his hold on Big Bow.

Clint moved in a wide circle and got above the mine. He saw a few figures outlined against the blaze. As he started to work downward, he heard the distant shouts from town. A few guns

[*Turn To Page* 90]

JUDO—THE GREAT EQUALIZER!

Helps The Weak Become Strong



The Science Of Self-Defense explained by a World Famous Expert

"JUDO-SELF TAUGHT IN PICTURES"

by Hubert Klinger-Klingerstorff—instructor of Judo at University Of Vienna

Contains:
500 pictures illustrating BONE LOCKS-STRANGLE HOLDS-POLICE GRIPS-ARM LOCKS- and THROWS. also DEFENSES AGAINST GUNMEN*THUGS*KNIFE THRUSTS*ETC.
A SIMPLIFIED PICTORIAL METHOD—Used as a Text Book in Judo Classes
Send For Your Book of "JUDO SELF TAUGHT IN PICTURES" right now—

You'll be glad you did! Only $1.00 check or money order.

WEHMAN BROTHERS Dept. JA 712 Broadway New York 3, N. Y.

PRICE SMASH

20 DRESSES for $3.50

BIG DRESS SALE

Assorted Used Dresses
Silk, Wool, Cotton and Rayon
All Sizes In Good Condition

- If temporarily out of the 20 Dresses, to better serve you, we will send you 5 of our No. 1 Grade Better Dresses (Dry Cleaned & Pressed) or 8 of our No. 2 Grade Dresses (Dry Cleaned & Pressed) of higher value at no additional cost.
- Money refunded if merchandise is not satisfactory.

A trial order will convince you of our wonderful Bargains.

FREE GIFT!
WITH EVERY ORDER!
Something useful and practical.
Get yours today!

Mail This Handy Coupon Today!

ACE MAIL ORDER CO. D-6
196 Degraw St., B'klyn 31, N. Y.

Enclosed find $1.00 Deposit. I will pay postman COD balance PLUS postage.

Name _____
Address _____
City _____

ITEM	SIZE	PRICE

WANTED

Commercial Artists
Letterers—Designers

COMMERCIAL artists WANTED by advertising agencies, publishers, newspapers, dept. stores, to fill HIGH-PAYING JOBS! 95 MILLION DOLLARS being spent for commercial art every year. Now YOU can prepare to enter this profitable field — become your own boss and command BIG FEES. You can learn Commercial Art, lettering, designing, cartooning—right at home, in spare time. Easy, SHOW-HOW LESSONS. INEXPENSIVE. Send for FREE book, "Art For Pleasure And Profit." Describes our method. Lists opportunities. Tells how you can get ahead FAST in Commercial Art. Write NOW to: **Washington School of Art, Studio 1283, Port Washington, N.Y.**

MAKE YOUR FORTUNE

Sell famous Spring-Step Cushion Shoes. Earn big money daily plus Cash Bonus and Retirement Income with amazing 2-minute demonstration that sells on sight. Big repeat business. Full or spare time. America's Biggest Selection of Shoes for all the family. Free outfit given. No investment ever. Write today.

ORTHO-VENT SHOE CO., Inc.
4385 Brand Road, Salem, Va.

FREE! U.S. STAMPS
plus COMPLETE U. S. CATALOG

Sensational Get-Acquainted Offer—from the world's largest stamp firm! FREE... scarce genuine postage stamp, as illustrated, picturing first U.S.A. (issued in 1847)! PLUS big collection of 30 all-different United States —19th century, valuable $1 stamp, etc. PLUS collection beautiful Commemoratives including American Revolution, Wild West, 1893 Columbian, many others. EXTRA: other exciting offers; Collectors' Guide; Big 64-page Bargain Catalog including all U. S. Postage Issues. Send 10c to help cover mailing expenses. Supplies limited. *Send coupon now!*

H. E. HARRIS & CO., 4181 Transit Bldg., Boston 17, Mass.
Rush my United States stamps and other offers. I enclose 10c for mailing expenses.

NAME_____

ADDRESS_____

CITY & STATE_____

barked and he knew the miners would be on the way any moment. He had to work fast.

Creeping slowly through the brush, he got within twenty-five yards of the campfire. He had heard voices a moment ago but now everything was quiet. Pushing away a branch, he peered through.

THERE WERE four men around the campfire. All were on their feet in an attitude of waiting. Clint Jensen saw the tenseness in their faces. Ed Towles, Ben Crowley and Mike Donlan were on one side of the fire. Duke Jensen stood alone on the other side. Between them flames crackled and leaped merrily.

Clint heard Towles speaking.

"Don't be a fool," the gunman smiled coldly, "you ain't got a chance against three guns, kid."

Duke's laugh drifted back through the woods. "Clint didn't have a chance either," he snapped. "He got it from behind. You'll be facin' me in the front an' I'm shootin' to kill!"

Clint wriggled forward hastily. He slipped the big gun from the holster and twirled the cylinders so they wouldn't stick.

"The odds are pretty big," Ben Crowley grinned. "That fool brother o' yours had it comin' to him. He's been stickin' his nose in everybody's business."

"If he dies," Duke said coldly, "I'll hunt you down—one by one, an' I'll never stop."

Ed Towles laughed harshly. "Why wait, kid?" he said. "We're all here now." The gunman's eyes were gleaming. Towles tasted blood. His hands were twitching at his side.

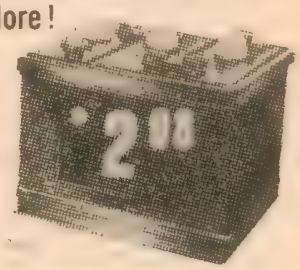
Mike Donlan moved out into the shadows. Clint heard the redhead's chuckle. "Three against one, kid," he said. "That ain't hardly fair."

[*Turn To Page 92*]

YOUR CAR MUST START INSTANTLY! — OR MONEY BACK!

Save Money With Amazing New Liquid That Makes "Dead Batteries" Spring to Life Instantly — Makes New Batteries Trouble-Free for 10 Years or More!

NO MORE BATTERY TROUBLE FOR THE LIFE OF YOUR CAR!



Detroit, Michigan – National Airlines, the battery manufacturers, trucking companies, yacht clubs and diesel users are praising the amazing chemical, non-acid liquid—"VX/6"—that *sends a surge of never-failing power through your battery INSTANTLY . . . even if your car has been in dead storage for 6 months . . . in broiling desert heat . . . in 40° below zero arctic weather . . . in jungles where rain falls for 90 days at a time . . . in submarines . . . in around the world air flights!*

Yes, a brilliant chemical engineer has perfected an entirely new liquid formula that makes even a "dead battery" spring to life instantly that makes *any* battery—old or new—*good for 10 years or longer!* Now you can start your car in one second . . . *never have a run-down battery for the rest of your life!*

This is the most electrifying development of the past sixty years for you 130 million car owners.

Imagine! For only a few pennies you can have 24-hour a day insurance against battery failures from now on! No more stopping dead on crowded highways, in tunnels, on bridges. No more expensive tows, no more laying out $25.00 to $40.00 every year for new batteries! Now – even if your present battery is two years old and can't take another charge . . . you can give it more *power* than it had when new simply by pouring "VX/6" into each cell . . . and the instantaneous new power will never fail you . . . *you can start instantly—within one second—at least 27 times . . . every day for the next 10 years!* There never was a guarantee like this in automotive history! Think of what this means to you. Your new or old-beat-up battery must turn over instantly 27 times a day for the life of your car . . . or *we'll pay the cost of getting it* to battery started anytime, anywhere between now and the time you sell your car *. . . and refund your money, too!* This is an unconditional guarantee. Only a battery additive that has been subjected to every kind of "torture test" on over 10,000 cars over a period of 5 years before it was released to the public would dare make such a guarantee! Battery Additive is recognized and accepted by the Bureau of Standards. Used to improve torpedo propulsion systems, by industry, airlines, diesel locomotives, battery manufacturers, air conditioning plants, truck fleet owners. Ships at sea, such as the Queen Mary, and Queen Elizabeth use similar devices. *Is insured against failure by famous Lloyds of London!*

NATIONAL AIRLINES RECHARGED TRUCK BATTERIES EVERY 3 DAYS — NOW 3,750 STARTS . . . EACH BATTERY GOOD FOR 10 YEARS MORE!

National Airlines used fork-lift trucks . . . each averaged 125 starts a day on busy airfields. As a result, EACH BATTERY HAD TO BE RECHARGED EVERY THREE OR FOUR DAYS! Since "VX/6" was added, each truck has been started on an average of 3,750 times without one recharge! Result: savings of thousands of dollars, savings of man hours . . . and each battery is now good for at least 10 years more of over 100 starts a day!

Why you are forced to buy a new battery in the next 8 months if you drive your car regularly!

As you know, your battery supplies the electric current for the ignition, all your engine equipment. PLUS POWER TO CRANK YOUR ENGINE!

When you use any of the equipment (radio, heater, windshield wipers, lights, etc.) or when you leave your car stand idle, the battery discharges electric current. Two things happen:

1. Some of the active materials from the lead plates shed or fall off forming useless "battery mud." THIS IS THE FIRST REASON YOU LOSE POWER . . .

2. Since all storage batteries contain a number of cells, each of which encloses several lead plates and separators, and since each cell is filled with water and sulphuric acid, an electrochemical action must take place in which the acid coming in contact with the lead plates makes electrical current. When the plates are partially covered with hard, inactive lead sulphate, the electrochemical action cannot take place and the battery goes dead!

How you must save with "VX/6"

1. Every time you recharge your present battery you *shorten its life and you add to the cost of the battery! With "VX/6" you can stop worrying about recharging your battery . . . never shorten its life . . . never add expenses to your car overhead!*

2. Every time your battery runs down, you strain the generator of your automobile. A dead battery will eventually ruin the other electrical equipment in the engine. *Only with VX/6 can you extend the life of your battery and prevent the costly damage a dead battery will cause!*

3. A dead, irreparable battery may constitute expensive, sometimes damaging towing charges. *You will save this costly trouble immediately with "VX/6" in your present battery.*

4. Your present day battery must run down regardless of the amount of use it receives. Since your battery is not a lifetime battery you will eventually have to spend $25 to $35 on a new battery. *Only with "VX/6" in your battery can you insure against a dead battery and additional battery expenses.*

5. If you depend on your car, and can't use it due to battery failure, you will run up additional expenses in transportation.

Thousands of testimonials like these

We highly recommend "VX/6" to everyone. No danger of overcharge . . . never any need to recharge a battery with this amazing liquid in batteries. Gives batteries a never-failing surge of power . . . that lasts and lasts

L. A., Miami Battery Exchange
Miami, Florida

Started using "VX/6" four years ago. Saved us $400 on maintenance and replacement costs . . . to say nothing of inconvenience of batteries "going dead" J. S., Associated Diamond Cabs
Miami, Florida

Have been using "VX/6" in our 10 trucks for past few years. This non-acid formula years ahead . . . it means we can use worn-out batteries for years more, has tripled and more the life of present batteries L. G., Sunny Brook Farms
Miami, Florida

Tried "VX/6" in batteries with two dead cells . . . after pouring in "VX/6" BATTERIES WITH DEAD CELLS SHOWED FULL CAPACITY! Same results on thousands of other batteries tested. L. J., Imperial Battery Company
Miami, Florida

A million times better than sulphuric acid . . . 400% more economical, more efficient in blistering heat . . . NOW OUR TRUCKS ENJOY FASTER STARTING, BRIGHTER LIGHTS AND BETTER OPERATION OF ALL ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT!

I. S., National Mover Co
Miami, Florida

Have used "VX/6" in all batteries for over three years. NOT ONE SINGLE BATTERY FAILURE YET. THIS IS A MIRACLE AND A SAVINGS OF THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS FOR A BIG FLEET SUCH AS OURS.

A. S., Mechanics Overall Service
Miami, Florida

Most of the batteries traded in are "weak" or "dead". BUT "VX/6" TURNED OLD BATTERIES INTO NEW BATTERIES . . . NOT ONE REPLACEMENT YET! IT'S AMAZING!

B. S., Dixie Motors
Miami, Florida

Over 50,000,000 batteries went dead in traffic in 1956!

It's a true fact – as you can easily find out! Imagine! Over thirty million cars "stopped dead" in heavy traffic . . . in the middle of bridges . . . in tunnels . . . on speed highways! Whole weekends were ruined! Families stood shivering by the roadside while the driver had to walk to put in an emergency call for a tow truck. Thousands of others had to flag down cars and taxies and offer ten dollars or more for a push! *Still others were killed on highways trying to get the car started!* Play safe – pour a little "VX/6" in each battery cell and you can have complete peace of mind . . . for years to come. No matter how old your battery cell is . . . you can take cross-country trips, travel over steaming deserts, plough through snow . . . leave your car standing in the rain – YET YOUR BATTERY WILL ALWAYS TURN OVER THE VERY INSTANT YOU TOUCH THE STARTER BUTTON . . . 27 times a day for the life of your car with amazing "VX 6" to safeguard you

World famed Reader's Digest tells the astonishing story!

Yes, the Reader's Digest released the exciting story of how a battery can last longer than the life of a car! It tells how the battery, is every motorist's greatest headache. If left unattended, it dies. If it gets low in subzero weather, it is likely to crack. It usually has to be replaced every year-and-a-half! Yet *now you can have a battery that runs 10 years or more!* Now you can have the same lifetime power as an expensive nickel-cadmium battery famous the world over . . . simply by pouring in a little "VX/6" into each cell!

Public Service Laboratory tests with "VX/6"

PROCEDURE: A discarded Delco 6 Volt battery was used for the following tests. History of this battery indicated that it had failed in use and was unable to hold a charge.

I. We added "VX 6 and charged the battery.

II. Battery was installed on 1955 Ford. With lights and radio on and ignition off. Self starter was run until battery was no run down, lights would not function or starter turn over. After less than two minutes with lights turned off battery started car motor with a surge of power regained during brief 90 second interval.

III. Battery was subjected to 40°F below Zero temperature for a continuous 24 hour period. Tests after 24 hours indicated ability to instantly start motor and operate electrical system at full efficiency. No loss of voltage occurred.

IV. Battery was subjected to an oven temperature of 160°F. No loss of electrolyte solution or power was indicated by test, and ability to perform starting and electrical functions remained at full rated efficiency.

V. After treating battery with "VX/6" and restoring power, 25% increase in light brightness was noted.

With "VX/6" in your battery you will find improvements you never expected!

1. Your headlights are 25% brighter.
2. Check your battery – will show higher terminal voltage.
3. Car starts immediately—time after time
4. Extra reserve of power for radio, heater, etc.
5. Your battery recuperates its power faster.
6. Strong enough to start in sub-normal, cold or heat!

TAKE THIS 4-SECOND BATTERY CHECK RIGHT NOW! DELAYS ARE COSTLY!

Open the hood of your car and look at the battery. The green or white formations you see around the anode and cathode, on the top and sides is *sulphation!* Sulphation means your battery is collecting mud . . . the plates are flaking and the battery is *dying!* UNLESS YOU ADD "VX/6" IMMEDIATELY, YOU WILL HAVE TO SPEND $25.00 to $40.00 FOR A NEW BATTERY!

INSURED BY FAMOUS LLOYD'S OF LONDON!

Yes, the most famous insurance company on the globe—Lloyd's of London—have insured "VX/6" against failure. It's also approved by the Miami Better Business Bureau . . . tested and approved by the "Public Service" . . . you KNOW that if it doesn't do everything we claim . . . you get your money back now . . . next year . . . in 1960 or in 1967. No new product ever released to the public was ever backed by such careful testing . . . was ever endorsed by so many giant companies, was ever used by so many countries and leaders of industry!

MAIL NO-RISK COUPON . . . THIS VERY SECOND!

VOLTEX COMPANY Dept. DA-1
P. O. Box 444, Great Neck, N. Y.

Gentlemen:
I'm sold! Send me a giant-sized bottle of "VX 6" immediately . . . enough for either a three or six cell battery! It is understood that if my battery doesn't start instantly . . . and if it doesn't start instantly for at least 27 times a day for the life of my car . . . I can claim my money back. I will pay the postman just the amount checked below plus C.O.D. charges: ☐ $2.98

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Zone _____ State _____

☐ SAVE 50¢. I enclose check, cash or money order and it is understood YOU WILL PAY THE POSTAGE. Same money-back guarantee!

Shrinks Hemorrhoids New Way Without Surgery

Science Finds Healing Substance That Relieves Pain—Shrinks Hemorrhoids

For the first time science has found a new healing substance with the astonishing ability to shrink hemorrhoids and to relieve pain — without surgery.

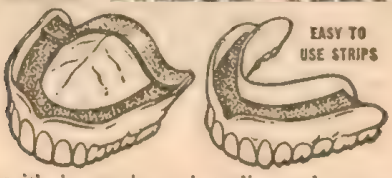
In case after case, while gently relieving pain, actual reduction (*shrinkage*) took place.

Most amazing of all — results were so thorough that sufferers made astonishing statements like "Piles have ceased to be a problem!"

The secret is a new healing substance (Bio-Dyne*)—discovery of a world-famous research institute.

This substance is now available in *suppository or ointment form* under the name *Preparation H.** Ask for it at all drug counters—money back guarantee. *Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.

EAT ANYTHING WITH FALSE TEETH



Trouble with loose plates that slip, rock or cause sore gums? Try Brimms Plasti-Liner. One application makes plates fit *snugly without powder, paste or cushions.* Brimms Plasti-Liner adheres permanently to your plate; ends the bother of temporary applications. With plates held firmly by Plasti-Liner, **YOU CAN EAT ANYTHING!** Simply lay soft strip of Plasti-Liner on troublesome upper or lower. Bite and it molds perfectly. *Easy to use,* tasteless, odorless, harmless to you and your plates. Removable as directed. Money-back guarantee. At your drug counter. $1.50 reliner for one plate; $2.50, two plates.

Special Offer! Free 35¢ package of Tri-Dent Brushless Denture Cleaner. Send only 10¢ for postage and handling. Offer expires May 31, 1958. Plasti-Liner, Inc., Dept. AP, 1075 Main St., Buffalo 9, N. Y.

BRIMMS PLASTI-LINER
THE PERMANENT DENTURE RELINER

ONE MILLION DOLLARS CASH

IN CONFEDERATE MONEY

Yours only $2.98

Be a deep south millionaire! Have money to burn! We'll send you exactly one million bucks in honest-to-goodness Confederate money—and all you pay is $2.98! You can do everything with this money but spend it. Amaze and amuse your cotton-pickin' friends. Win bar bets by the barrel! Light your cigars and cigarettes with $10.00 bills! Live it up! It's a million dollars worth of laughs and fun—all for only $2.98.
You get one million bucks in $10's, $20's, $50's, $100's etc. denominations—enough to keep your friends laughing and happy for months—This offer is limited. Only $4 million dollars to a customer. Our supply of this loot is limited—so rush your order... One Million dollars only $2.98. Four Million dollars only $10.00. If not delighted keep $100,000 for your trouble and return the rest of the money for a full and prompt refund. Send to—BEST VALUES CO., Dept. M-100, 403 Market Street, Newark, New Jersey.

Clint came up to his feet and stepped into the firelight.

"Reckon it's a little more even now," he said quietly.

Ben Crowley laughed from across the fire. "It's all accordin' to how you look at it, Marshal," he grinned. "As fer me..."

STILL TALKING, the short man's hand dipped for his gun. Flame flared in Clint Jensen's gun. The roar of it filled the mountainside. Crowley was still yanking at the holster as he started to crumple.

Ed Towles fired a second later from the other side of the fire. Clint felt the slug slam into his left arm. He spun around and poked a shot at Towles.

The gunman dropped to the ground unhit, his gun still barking.

"Watch the redhead!" Clint roared. Mike Donlan had jumped out into the shadows as Crowley went down. Donlan's gun spoke from the darkness and Duke Jensen shot at the flare. They heard the scream of pain and a falling body.

Towles shot across the fire and his bullet struck Duke in the leg. The younger brother staggered back and fell into the bushes. Clint, still on his feet, poked a shot at Towles as the gunman sprang up to his feet.

The bullet caught Towles in the body and he crumpled forward. The shot from his gun went into the fire, kicking up hot ashes.

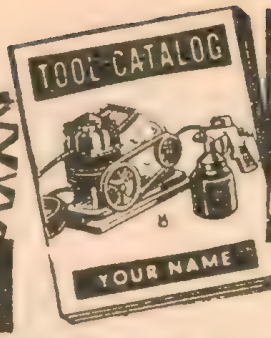
Clint Jensen felt the blood dripping from his hand. Of the five men who had started to shoot, he alone was still on his feet. He reeled into the bushes and found Duke sitting up holding his left leg.

"Reckon it's not much." Duke said. "How did you make out?"

Clint grinned. "Pinked in the arm," he explained. He bent down and helped the younger man to his feet. They saw the lights through the woods

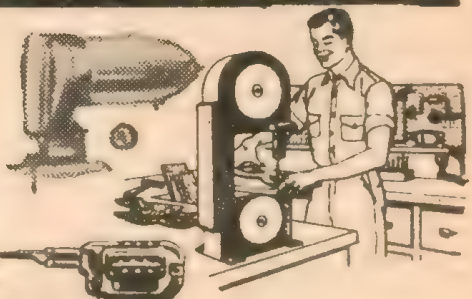
[*Turn To Page 94*]

Tools Wholesale



EARN BIG *Spot Cash* PROFITS
IN A BUSINESS OF YOUR OWN...FULL OR PART TIME

MAKE $20 A DAY

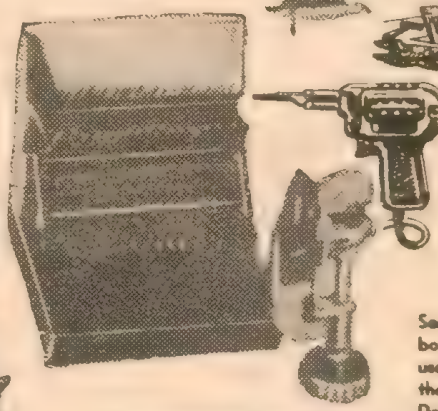


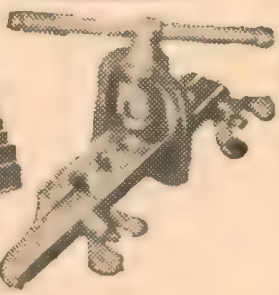
NATIONALLY ADVERTISED TOOLS

at a Wholesale DISCOUNT up to

50% OFF

You can buy as you need it. A million dollar inventory at your fingertips.
... Stanley, Millers Falls, Plumb, Disston, Wiss, Black & Decker, Clemson, Thor, Ridgid, K & E, Lufkin and hundreds of other nationally advertised name brand tools, appliances, motors, electric tools, power tools and others too numerous to mention.





You can buy Nationally Advertised Hand Tools, Power Tools, Appliances and Hardware at a DISCOUNT up to

50% OFF

Order as you need it. No Investment Required.

START YOUR OWN BUSINESS

Sell tools to your friends, neighbors, for industrial and institutional use. Everyone needs tools. Meet the demands of the tremendous Do-It-Yourself Market. Build your own business selling nationally advertised tools from an illustrated coded catalog bearing your name and only your name on it. You get all the orders and reorders. You sell merchandise that is pre-sold for you through national advertising by the country's leading tool manufacturers, such as Black and Decker, Clemson, Disston, K & E, Lufkin, Millers Falls, Ridgid, Stanley, Thor, Wiss and many others! You need not carry any stock—use our capital! All orders received are shipped the same day from our warehouse stock of over 15,000 items. All merchandise sold on unconditional money-back guarantee. Don't Wait. Act today! Send $1.00 Deposit for Dealer's card and get our giant new 1958 wholesale catalog at no extra charge. Your $1.00 is credited to your first purchase or refunded if you are not 100% satisfied. MAIL COUPON NOW! Tool Discount House, Dept. 80, 72 Prospect Street, Paterson, New Jersey.

ENCLOSE $1.00 FOR DEALERS CARD & MAMMOTH TOOL CATALOG

ACT NOW! MAIL COUPON TODAY!

1958 WHOLESALE CATALOG

- Hand Tools
- Power Tools
- Hardware
- Appliances

100% MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

This Coupon Gets You Started!

U. S. GENERAL SUPPLY CORP. Dept. 211
403 Market St., Newark, N. J.

I am enclosing $1.00. Rush me your dealer's card and big Catalog Today. If I am not completely satisfied with your plan, I understand that I can return the Dealer's Card and Catalog for refund, and if I decide to order, my $1.00 will be deductible from my first order.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Zone _____ State _____

BE YOUR OWN BOSS

Earn more from the start! Set up your own profitable business, in your own home, enjoy steady income, independence for life—in the booming field of custom upholstery. Right off you start learning with tools, complete frames, fabrics and materials, included FREE with your UTS course. You learn skilled professional custom upholstery, re-upholstery, furniture finishing, repairs, how to make beautiful slip covers, window cornices, cushions and draperies. EARN WHILE YOU LEARN, in your spare time...the UTS easy way.

FREE Illustrated Book, With Sample Lesson. Get ready for a well-paid job, big profits, from steady work, as your own boss, running your own business. Mail coupon NOW! Training in N. Y. School also available.

APPROVED FOR VETERAN TRAINING

UPHOLSTERY TRADES SCHOOL
Dept. GN-4010, 721 B'way, N.Y. 3, N.Y.

Please send me free book with Free Sample Lesson. No obligation—no salesman will call.

☐ School Training ☐ Home Study

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... Zone ..... State .....

☐ Check if Korean Veteran

NEW, NATURAL LIGHTWEIGHT
DENTAL PLATE

MADE FROM YOUR OLD ONE—New, Professional Method gives you natural-looking, perfect-fitting plastic plate—upper, lower or partial—from your old cracked or loose plate *without an impression*. CLINICAL method means fast service, huge savings. Try new plate full 30 days at our risk. New plates sent you Air Mail *same day*.

Now Priced Low As $15.95

SEND NO MONEY—just your name and address for full particulars FREE. No cost. No obligation. Act now.

CLINICAL DENTAL LAB., 335 W. Madison St., Dept. 626, Chicago 6, Ill.

Everybody's Doing it!

"SWAP" PHOTOS

WALLET Size 2½ x 3½ on PORTRAIT QUALITY PAPER

Just pennies per picture for beautiful portrait-quality reproductions of your own favorite photograph. Send one portrait or snapshot (returned unharmed) And money to:

WALLET PHOTOS, Box AQ-108 Hillside, N.J.

25 for $1

60 for $2

In a hurry? Send 25c extra for Super-Speed service.

MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

We pay postage

HER PERFUME HIGHLIGHTED HER GLAMOUR!

Why shouldn't it have? She was using the same type as a famous FRENCH PERFUME selling at $17 an ounce. But she only paid $1 for 3 attractive 1 dram vials.

Send your $1 now for 3 different well-known types and save tax and postage. Value $5.

DORISIA, 249-66 60 Ave., Little Neck, 62, N.Y.

below as the miners started up the mountain.

"I didn't know Donlan had bushwhacked you," Duke said, "until one of the miners came in with the story."

Clint nodded. "What about Wester?" he asked. "I figure he's still the boss, Duke, and we only got the small fry here."

Duke Jensen grimaced. "You couldn't get a witness when you tried Ed Towles. I reckon you got one now, Clint."

The town marshal grinned. "Maybe I'd better drop in an' see Wester," he murmured. He watched the enraged miners breaking into the camp. They stopped and stared at the inert forms of Ed Towles and Ben Crowley.

"My brother was on our side," Clint said quietly. "I'm responsible for him." He started down the mountain, left arm hanging limp at his side. The gray was tied in the thicket and he rode back through the town. It was quiet, and seemed deserted. There was a light in Bill Wester's office.

DISMOUNTING Clint Jensen walked toward the light. Shoving in the door, he stepped into the room, right hand on the butt of the six-shooter at his side. He blinked in surprise.

"Good evening," Wester chuckled. "Take your hand off that gun, Jensen."

Clint stared at the six lean, dark-skinned men lounging around the walls. Three of them already had guns out of the holster. The hired hand cases from Indian Creek had arrived!

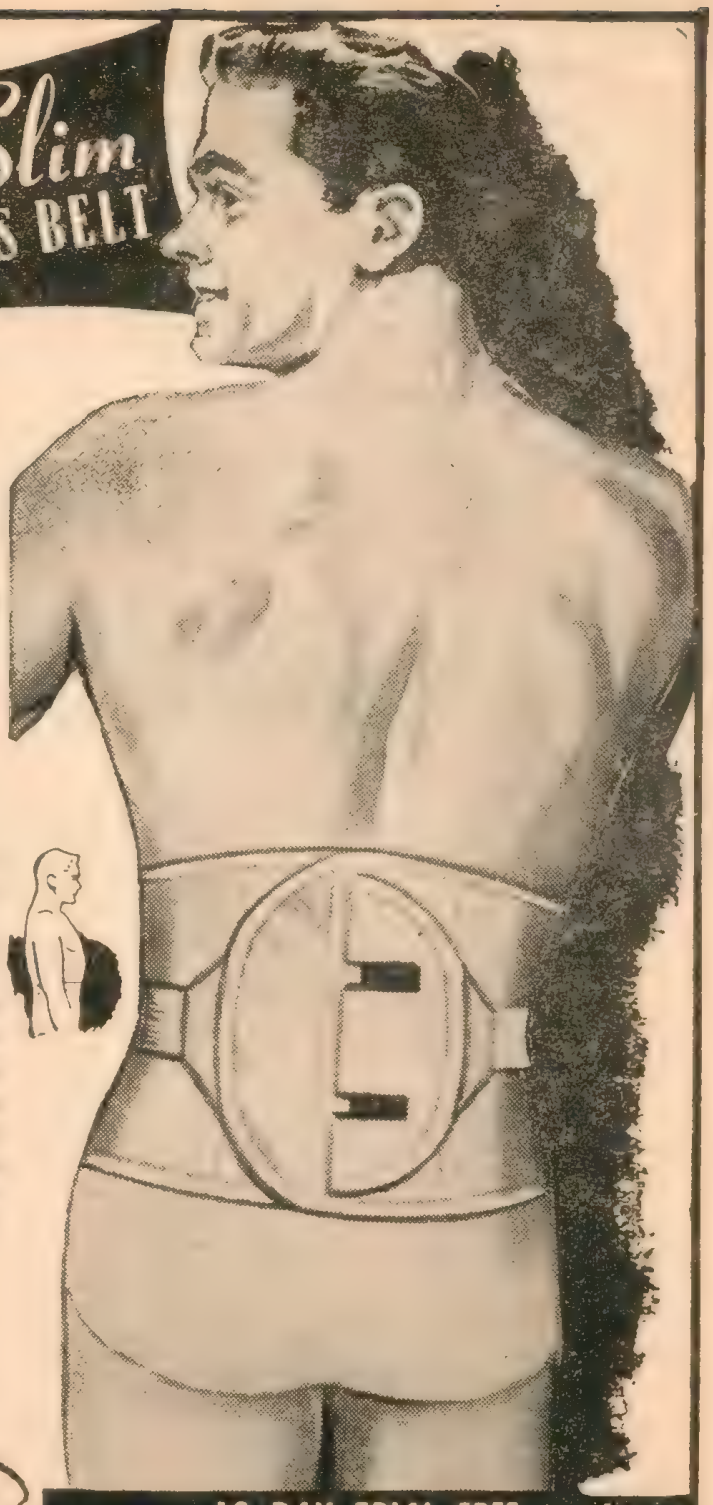
"A little surprise party," Wester murmured. "We intended to look you up shortly. This will save us the trouble."

Clint smiled coldly. "I reckon your boys came a little too late, Wester," he grinned. "We just cleaned out your gang at the mine and I came down for you."

[*Turn To Page 96*]

Wonder Slim
OUR BEST MEN'S BELT

ONLY **4.98**



WORKS WONDERS FOR YOUR BACK

LOOK SLIM — FEEL TRIM

Wonder Slim is a new kind of men's supporter belt. Its ingenious contour design follows nature's own lines—permits remarkable freedom of movement. Its patented sliding back panel makes it the easiest belt to put on . . . provides "quick as a flash" adjustment for constant perfect fit. No uncomfortable crotch. Scientific "no pressure" boning flattens the bulge gently but firmly. Sliding back provides support just where you need it for youthful posture . . . fights the feeling of fatigue. Made of super test herringbone twill. Waist sizes 26-44—Only $4.98. Try it at our risk.

FEATURES

Takes inches off waist
Raises abdomen and keeps it in
Gives vital back support
Straightens sagging stomach muscles
Gives your clothes that custom-made look

10 DAY TRIAL FREE

S. J. Wegman Co. Dept. GW-84
Lynbrook, N. Y.

Rush my Wonder-Slim back supporter at once. If I am not 100% satisfied I may return it for prompt refund of the full purchase price.

Waist Size.....inches
☐ Send C.O.D. I'll pay postman $4.98 plus a few cents postage.
☐ I enclose $4.98 payment and save postage. Same Guarantee.

Name.....
Address .....

NOW! BORROW by MAIL

CONFIDENTIAL . . . FAST!

Here's the easiest, most private way to borrow. If you are regularly employed in an acceptable occupation and need cash now . . . rush the coupon. We make quick cash loans from $50-$600 **anywhere** in the U.S. ENTIRELY BY MAIL. No agents will call. Repay in small monthly installments to fit your income. **No endorsers.** Your employer, relatives, tradespeople, friends never know you are applying for a loan. RUSH COUPON today for information and Money Request sent **free** in plain envelope.

$50 to $600

POSTAL FINANCE CO., Dept. 674-K
200 Keeline Bldg., Omaha, Nebraska

POSTAL FINANCE CO., Dept. 674-K
200 Keeline Bldg., Omaha, Nebraska
Please rush FREE information and Money Request Form.
NAME .....
ADDRESS .....
TOWN ..... STATE .....
OCCUPATION .....
AGE ..... AMOUNT YOU WANT TO BORROW $ .....

LAW FREE BOOK THE LAW TRAINED MAN

Write today for a FREE copy of illustrated law book, **"THE LAW-TRAINED MAN,"** which shows how to earn the professional Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.) degree through home study of the famous Blackstone Law Course. All necessary books and lessons provided. Moderate cost; convenient monthly terms. Write for FREE law training book today.

Blackstone School of Law, 307 N. Michigan Ave.
Founded 1890 **Dept. 10-A, Chicago 1, Ill.**

EARN EXTRA CASH!

It's Easy to Take Orders for Advertising Book Matches!

Every business in town is your prospect. No experience needed; we show you how! Millions sold daily! Manufacturer offers you year 'round prestige opportunity with steady repeat earnings. Rush postcard today for details on FREE Sales Outfit, samples.

MATCH CORPORATION OF AMERICA
Dept. LK-1, 3433-43 W. 48th Place, Chicago 32, Ill.

Unsurpassed Comfort With Improved

RUPTURE ★ RELIEVER

DOUBLE only $4.95

Right or Left $4.95

NO FITTING REQUIRED
ADJUSTABLE FOR YOUR COMFORT

AT LAST A NEW FORM-FITTING WASHABLE BRACER WITH ADJUSTABLE LEG-STRAPS THAT'S GUARANTEED TO BE THE MOST COMFORTABLE YOU EVER WORE! NO SNAPS, NO LACES, NO STEEL. Amazing new kind of flat groin pad for support with complete comfort. BEST TOO AS AFTER OPERATION SUPPORT. Order by MAIL.
☐ RIGHT SIDE $4.95. ☐ LEFT SIDE $4.95.
☐ DOUBLE $4.95. Measurement around LOWEST PART OF ABDOMEN IN INCHES IS: ..... inches. SENT ON APPROVAL. AVOID SERIOUS DELAY — SOLD ON MONEY BACK GUARANTEE.

WRIGHT BRACER CO.
Dept. 154, 403 Market St., Newark, New Jersey

Bill Wester's jaw twitched, and again his eyes drifted to the sagging left arm and the small pool of blood forming on the wooden floor. Watching him, Clint could almost read his mind. Wester knew there had been a fight, but he didn't know which side had been victorious.

CLINT JENSEN addressed the gunmen by the wall. "There are fifty men surrounding this place," he murmured. "You boys ain't done nothing as yet and you got a chance to get out. Start movin'."

"He's bluffing," Wester snapped. "Send a man out to look."

The leader of the six, a tall redhaired man, moistened his lips nervously.

"I reckon we didn't figger on fifty of 'em, Mr. Wester," he said at last.

"He's bluffing," Wester snarled.

"No he ain't, Mister," a voice came over Clint's shoulder. Clint didn't look around but he recognized old John Anderson. "You boys start shootin'," the old man growled, "an' you'll git plugged full o' holes in two minutes."

THE TOWN MARSHAL caught his breath, but evidenced no further surprise.

"Start ridin'," he urged them again. "Six men don't stack up against fifty. We want Wester, not you."

The six from Indian Creek stared at each other—and then, one by one, they filed out the back door. Clint heard their horses pounding away a moment later.

John Anderson, a bandage around his arm and shoulder, stepped up to Clint's side.

"I was passin' by," John grinned. "I wanted to go up to the mine when I saw you comin' in here, Clint." He chuckled loudly. "I heard what you said, mister, an' I figgered you'd need a little support."

"Thanks," Clint Jensen smiled.

"You don't have anything against

me," Wester snapped. "I can break any case you start, Jensen." He still sat behind his desk, hand below the level.

"In the morning," Clint told him calmly, "we're moving to Tucson. Maybe it'll be different there." He was ready for the next move because it was one he'd seen used many times.

The blue barrel of a six-shooter protruded over the edge of the desk.

Clint shoved John Anderson across the room, at the same time dropping toward the floor himself. Wester's first slug skipped across his shoulder blades, scarcely breaking the skin.

The town marshal's right hand dipped and the six-shooter appeared in his hand. On his knees he flashed two shots at Wester as the silver operator bounced to his feet. The first slug took the big man directly in the chest, knocking him back into the chair. The second struck him in the forehead, jerking his head back as if it had been on hinges.

Clint Jensen stood up, smoke curling from the gun.

IT WAS nearly midnight when Clint went up to the hotel. He saw Nancy Kline standing in the dim light on the wood porch. She moved toward him quickly as he put a foot on the steps.

"Are you all right, Mr. Jensen?"

"The name," he grinned, "is Clint."

"Clint," she said. "It sounds nice."

"It's nice," he told her, "the way you say it." He continued up the steps and he saw the moonlight on her face; saw happiness in her eyes.

"You're wounded," Nancy Kline whispered.

"I don't feel anything," Clint grinned. "I reckon I'm in heaven lady!"

You've Convinced Us, Pardners!

We've been sittin' here, thinking about all those fine, friendly letters you've been writing, asking us why we don't make WESTERN ACTION a digest-size magazine. "Look at how slick FAMOUS WESTERN is, since you made it that handy pocket size", you've said.

Well, now we just can't help agreeing with y'all — and for a matter o' fact, we've been wanting to do just this thing. All we needed to spur us into action was some words of encouragement from you. So...

don't forget the new, digest-size

WESTERN ACTION

132 Pages — July issue on sale May 1st

How Close to Divorce Have You Come?

YOU may never know the answer to that question. You may never suspect that your wife was even thinking of such a serious thing. But stop and think for a moment, "What are the three things that she really expects from you, her husband?" The answer must be love, companionship and financial security.

Ask yourself this question honestly now: *Are you in good physical condition — fully alert, and able to endure the daily stress and strain of your job?* If you haven't the pep and youthful vitality you'd like to have, your condition may be due to a common, but easily corrected vitamin and mineral deficiency in your diet. You owe it to yourself to find out whether safe, high-potency Vitasafe Capsules can help you, as they have helped thousands. Take advantage of the sensational *trial* offer described below!

25¢ *just to help cover shipping expenses of this*

FREE 30 days supply High-Potency Capsules

LIPOTROPIC FACTORS, VITAMINS AND MINERALS

Safe, Nutritional Formula Containing 27 Proven Ingredients: Glutamic Acid, Choline, Inositol, Methionine, Citrus Bioflavonoid, 11 Vitamins (Including Blood-Building B-12 and Folic Acid) Plus 11 Minerals

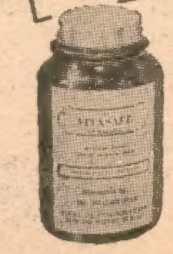
To prove to you the remarkable advantages of the Vitasafe Plan... we will send you, without charge, a 30-day free supply of high potency VITASAFE C.F. CAPSULES so you can discover for yourself how much healthier, happier and peppier you may feel after a few days' trial! Just one of these capsules each day supplies your body with over *twice* the minimum adult daily requirement of Vitamins A, C, and D — *five times* the minimum adult daily requirement of Vitamin B-1, and the *full* concentration recommended by the National Research Council for the other four important vitamins!

Vitasafe Capsules also contain Glutamic Acid, a natural substance derived from wheat gluten and thought by many doctors to help nourish the brain cells for more power of concentration and increased mental alertness. And now, to top off this exclusive formula each capsule also brings you an important dosage of Citrus Bioflavonoid — the anti-cold factor that has been so widely acclaimed.

AMAZING PLAN SLASHES VITAMIN PRICES ALMOST IN HALF

With your free vitamins you will also receive complete details regarding the benefits of this amazing new Plan that provides you regularly with all the factory-fresh vitamins and minerals you will need. *You are under no obligation to buy anything!* If after taking your free Capsules for three weeks you are not entirely satisfied, simply return the handy postcard that comes with your free supply and that will end the matter. Otherwise it's up to us — you don't have to do a thing — and we will see that you get your monthly supplies of capsules *on time* for as long as you wish, at the low money-saving price of only $2.78 per month *(a saving of 45%)*.

©1958 VITASAFE CORP., 43 W. 61St., N.Y., N.Y.



VITASAFE CORP. 445
43 West 61st Street, New York 23, N. Y.

Yes, I accept your generous no-risk offer under the Vitasafe Plan as advertised

Send me my FREE 30-day supply of high-potency Vitasafe Capsules as checked below:

☐ Man's Formula ☐ Woman's Formula

I ENCLOSE 25¢ PER PACKAGE to pay for packing and postage.

Name.....

Address.....

City..... Zone..... State.....

This offer is limited to those who have never before taken advantage of this generous trial. Only one trial supply per person.

IN CANADA: 394 Symington Ave., Toronto 9, Ont.
(Canadian Formula adjusted to local conditions.)

Reducing Specialist Says:

LOSE WEIGHT Where It Shows Most REDUCE MOST ANY PART OF THE BODY WITH

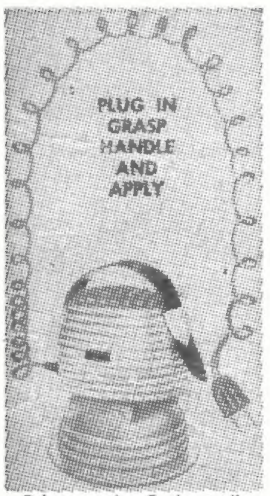
ELECTRIC Spot Reducer

Spot Reducer

Relaxing • Soothing Penetrating Massage

UNDERWRITERS LABORATORY APPROVED

FOR GREATEST BENEFIT IN REDUCING by massage use spot REDUCER with or without electricity—Also used as an aid in the relief of pains for which massage is indicated.



Take pounds off—keep slim and trim with Spot Reducer! Remarkable new invention which uses one of the most effective reducing methods employed by masseurs and turkish baths—MASSAGE!

TAKE OFF EXCESS WEIGHT!

Don't Stay FAT—You Can LOSE POUNDS and INCHES SAFELY Without Risking HEALTH

LIKE a magic wand, the "Spot Reducer" obeys your every wish. Most any part of your body where it is loose and flabby, wherever you have extra weight and inches, the "Spot Reducer" can aid you in acquiring a youthful, slender and graceful figure. The beauty of this scientifically designed Reducer is that the method is so simple and easy, the results quick, sure and harmless. No exercises or strict diets. No steambaths, drugs or laxatives.

With the SPOT REDUCER you can now enjoy the benefits of RELAXING, SOOTHING massage in the privacy of your own home! Simple to use—just plug in, grasp handle and apply over most any part of the body—stomach, hips, chest, neck, thighs, arms, buttocks, etc. The relaxing, soothing massage breaks down FATTY TISSUES, tones the muscles and flesh, and the increased awakened blood circulation carries away waste fat—helps you regain and keep a firmer and more GRACEFUL FIGURE!

YOUR OWN PRIVATE MASSEUR AT HOME

When you use the Spot Reducer, it's almost like having your own private masseur at home. It's fun reducing this way! It not only helps you reduce and keep slim—but also aids in the relief of those types of aches and pains—and tired nerves that can be helped by massage! The Spot Reducer is handsomely made of light weight aluminum and rubber and truly a beautiful invention you will be thankful you own. AC 110 volts. Underwriters Laboratory approved.

TRY THE SPOT REDUCER 10 DAYS FREE IN YOUR OWN HOME!

Mail this coupon with only $1 for your Spot Reducer on approval. Pay postman $8.95 plus delivery—or send $9.95 (full price) and we ship postage prepaid. Use it for ten days in your own home. Then if not delighted return Spot Reducer for full purchase price refund. Don't delay! You have nothing to lose—except ugly, embarrassing, undesirable pounds of FAT. MAIL COUPON now!

MAIL THIS 10 DAY FREE TRIAL COUPON NOW!

SENT ON APPROVAL—MAIL COUPON NOW!

BODY MASSAGER CO., Dept. B-983
403 Market St., Newark, N. J.

Please send me the Spot Reducer for 10 days trial period. I enclose $1. Upon arrival I will pay postman only $8.95 plus postage and handling. If not delighted I may return SPOT REDUCER within 10 days for prompt refund of full purchase price.

☐ I enclose $12.98. Send DeLuxe Model.

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... State .....

☐ SAVE POSTAGE—check here if you enclose $9.95 with coupon. We pay all postage and handling charges. Same money back guarantee applies.

LOSE WEIGHT OR NO CHARGE

ALSO USE IT FOR ACHES AND PAINS

CAN'T SLEEP:

Relax with electric Spot Reducer. See how soothing its gentle massage can be. Helps you sleep when massage can be of benefit.

MUSCULAR ACHES:

A handy helper for transient relief of discomforts that can be aided by gentle, relaxing massage.

LOSE WEIGHT OR NO CHARGE

USED BY EXPERTS

Thousands have lost weight this way — in hips, abdomen, legs, arms, necks, buttocks, etc. The same method used by stage, screen and radio personalities and leading reducing salons. The Spot Reducer can be used in your spare time, in the privacy of your own room.

ORDER IT TODAY!

LOSE WEIGHT OR NO CHARGE

GAIN MORE WEIGHT IN 10 DAYS OR YOUR MONEY BACK!

LOOK AT SKINNY! I wouldn't be seen with him!
LATER
...AND HE USED TO BE SO SKINNY!
AM I PROUD OF THE WAY THE GIRLS LOOK AT YOU!
WHAT A MAN!

SKINNY

MEN ARE OFTEN ASHAMED TO STRIP FOR SPORTS OR FOR A SWIM!

GIRLS ARE NOT ALLURING AND DON'T HAVE EYE-CATCHING CURVES!

CHILDREN WHO WON'T EAT AND ARE UNDER-WEIGHT, OFTEN CALLED SKINNY!

Now at last More-Wate plan that puts firm, attractive pounds and inches on your body, chest, arms and legs.

Amazing New Way developed by modern medical science to put on weight on lean bodies. **Guaranteed** to give you up to an **extra pound a day!** Or **your money back!** Why should you dread going to parties and socials, simply because you look scrawny and spindly? Why ever feel self-conscious about your body again? If you're **underweight*** . . . or just a little on the thin side, due to faulty appetite, or bad dietary habits, you can **put on up to a pound a day** of **attractive weight** without exercise . . . dangerous drugs . . . or special diet . . . and more quickly, more easily than you ever dreamed possible . . . with MORE-WATE. MORE-WATE contains no dangerous drugs . . . you **eat it like candy!** Yet . . . if you were to have this same prescription compounded to your order, it would cost you many times more. However, through this introductory offer, you can obtain **4-way** MORE-WATE tablets . . . a full 10 days' supply . . . for just $1.00 or a 30 day supply for only $2.98, plus a 10 day supply free, with an absolute money-back guarantee! Yes, try MORE-WATE for TEN DAYS . . . and if not entirely delighted with weight gained, return the unused supply for full refund! You've nothing to lose . . . and **weight to gain!** Act now! Stop being the guy or the gal that everyone calls "skimny." Stop being the guy or the gal who dreads summer and going to parties and socials because it means everyone will enjoy themselves and you won't. Don't be a wall-flower, because you have a figure like a broomstick! **Gain more weight!**

10-DAY SUPPLY ONLY $1.

The 4-way MORE-WATE tablets are **unconditionally guaranteed** to put on weight . . . or it doesn't cost you a penny! MORE-WATE is a **delicious,** full strength, 4-way tablet . . . that combines not just one . . . or two . . . but 4 of the most amazing aids for **gaining weight** known to medical science. MORE-WATE is not a liquid . . . not a powder. It's delicious, **pleasant-tasting tablet!** It contains vitamin **B-12** . . . the **amazing red vitamin doctors** give many **underweight patients** in **hospitals** . . . It contains Iron that helps correct iron deficiency, anemia and builds rich, red blood. It contains appetite-building vitamin B-1 . . . and it contains nutritious easily assimilated malt, the amazing ingredient that helps your body turn much of the food you eat into **well rounded flesh** instead of being wasted. **That's the secret of putting on weight.** Now you can help your food to **add new pounds** to your **arms, chest, hips, thighs,** and **legs.** Now you don't have to be skinny . . . or afraid to be seen socially and be ashamed of your figure! **You must achieve the figure you want . . . or don't pay anything.** Act now!

Not one child yet has failed to go for and ask for more MORE-WATE tablets! Stop worrying about children not eating enough, give them MORE-WATE tablets—it stimulates their appetite . . . they eat it like candy!

SENSATIONAL 10-DAY TEST!

Mail the coupon now! Test the amazing MORE-WATE tablet plan for 10 days at our expense. If after 10 days your friends, your mirror and your scale do not tell you that you have gained weight and look better you pay nothing!

MAIL THIS NO RISK TRIAL COUPON NOW!

MORE-WATE CO., Dept. M-302
403 Market Street, Newark, N. J.
Just mail us your name and address, and $1.00 cash, check or money order. You will receive a 10 day supply of MORE-WATE tablets and plan, postage prepaid.

☐ Send me 30 day supply plus an extra 10 day supply (that's a 40 day supply) for $2.98. I understand that if I am not delighted with MORE-WATE tablets and plan, I can return the 30 day supply in 10 days for full purchase price refund, and keep the 10 day supply without charge.

NAME.....ADDRESS.....

CITY.....STATE.....

SENT ON APPROVAL—MAKE AMAZING 10-DAY TEST